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A GREEN TENT IN FLANDERS

A GREEN TENT IN FLANDERS

BY

MAUD MORTIMER

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Autour de la terre obsedée
Circule au fond des nuits, au cœurs des jours,
Toujours
L'orage amoncelé des idées.

—VERHAEREN

ILLUSTRATED
BY
THE AUTHOR

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1917

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To
A. T.

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A GREEN TENT IN FLANDERS

CALIFORNIAN GOLD

December 3, 1915.

At Pisa they began to come in—a young, nice-looking Italian clerk and an older man with one of those gracious manners that make travelling in Italy so much pleasanter than travelling elsewhere.

We had hardly settled ourselves into three of the corners when a tall woman, her arms full of furs and pillows, came to the door. She eyed us carefully then, seeming satisfied that we would do, dropped her possessions into the empty corner by the door and disappeared, coming back a moment later with a valise, a hat box, and several large paper

bags to be stowed away above and below her with the help of the two men.

The wire that had led to my corner seat had found me in Fiesole. It was from the Directress of a field hospital in France and offered me a temporary vacancy. I am no trained nurse and my V. A. D. official tag was too new to carry much self-confidence with it. I had therefore accepted the offer not without trepidation. It had been like a leap from a springboard into depths out of which, with the confused rush of many cautions and good wishes ringing in my ears, I had just emerged.

Never was I more elated by the detachment and liberation that the beginning of a railway journey always brings me. Yesterday had been all personal scrimmage and disorder: to-morrow unaccustomed cords of emotion would perhaps twang. In Italy woolies, all white, for men struggling in the passes of their own Alps to hold the enemy, were daily being sent to the front, though as yet war had scarred little within sight of her civilian population. But how was I going

to find the familiar face of France? Sixteen months before her side had been ripped open and blood from the wound was still trickling along her trenches.

First would come Paris; then the hospital within sound of the guns. Deep in the cushions and alone with my thoughts I could let myself be as tired as I liked. Kind solicitude had remained behind waving handkerchiefs in Florence, its parting words in the knot of golden sweet-scented mimosa in my hand. Through misty windows, without any effort of my own, the curtain rose and fell on the Ligurian shore. Rearing blue waves flashed exultantly in the breathing spaces between sulphurous tunnels, and spidery bridges over riotous toy torrents alternated with the deep green of cypress and pine. All that was too good to last. Something was angling for my consciousness. A shadow of uneasiness was being cast upon me. Improvidently I glanced round.

The Swede, for so she turned out to be, was sitting quietly in her corner, but she was evidently unquiet in her mind. Her eye

roved restless and appraising from one of us to the other. Finding me perhaps the most accessible, since apparently I had no more to do or think about than she had, she opened fire. She was from Florence. She had lived there with her sister for many years. They owned a villa, pink and spacious with trees all around it, and a garden step-terraced with shaped pools of water. Surely I must know it—a landmark of the hillside? And so on through a string of personal details.

The spell of my journey was broken. At Genoa the pleasant middle-aged man got out, and Red Cross girls shook their collecting boxes in our faces. We moved on and the Swede began again. Then suddenly emboldened she reached her point: "Would you mind, madame, sitting on the other side and letting me lie down here? I am much of an invalid."

I was so taken aback by the request that almost hypnotically I consented, though the other corner unpleasantly turned its back to the engine. Still, had she not the privilege of declared infirmity?

She barely thanked me. With evident relish she carefully spread out her furs, arranged her pillows, reached up to the rack for her paper bags, and made a substantial meal. Then stretching herself out, her head in my desirable corner, she was soon in a sound sleep.

The young clerk caught my eye and smiled.

At the next station two more passengers got in and, naturally, sat on our side filling out our number, four. Presently a young girl looked in. The train was evidently full by that time. Seeing a little space at the feet of the sleeper, she began making herself thin enough to fit into it without waking our invalid. But life, alas, is not so simple. An irritable voice from the other end of the seat protested, "Mademoiselle, do you not see that I am trying to sleep? If you must come in here at all, sit on the other side." The young girl, apparently some one's little maid and accustomed to obey, got up, made a broken apology, and gently went out into the corridor where she stood with her back to

us looking out into the night. A wave of indignation began to move in me, not allayed by the strong smell of sausage and other succulent viands coming from the paper bags under my nose. So the next time the girl shyly glanced round at us I said, "That whole side does not belong to Madame. I am sure she will draw her feet up a little. You cannot stand all night." I was the more encouraged as I felt the sympathy of the compartment behind me. A voice in no way softened by physical weakness came from the Swede who, raising herself on an elbow and glaring at me said, "Who put you there to police me? What is it to you if Mademoiselle stands all night?"

As a shy person you have perhaps tasted the gratifying sense of enlargement when, in a quarrel not your own, after the first stammering words chokingly uttered, you suddenly find yourself becoming eloquent. High words passed between us on the rights of individuals. Then she spread herself out again with her feet pushed well up against the girl who, in the heat of the fray and at a

sign from the young clerk, had slipped into the vacant corner.

I gaze musingly at her neutral back. How will it be where my camp hospital sits on that thin line between life and death? There, at last, will the gyves of egotism be for a moment loosened?

Toward midnight we slowed down at the frontier, and went through the farce of showing passports and being matched with sketchy snapshots in which an eager lover could hardly trace a likeness. A custom-house official, putting his head into each carriage, repeated the question, "Has any one here any gold?" Now in an under pocket I had three double-eagles, such as in California we used caressingly to call Golden Cartwheels, and four ten-dollar gold pieces—a last thought of my husband's as I left the land where "l'oncle de la Californie" rolls round on such wheels. "One never knows what may happen. You had better keep these against an emergency—and for luck," he had said. And I had kept them now ten long months, until they had moved for me

out of the zone of possible currency and become, like so many of one's possessions, merely sentimental and superstitious treasures.

"Has any one here any gold?"

Certainly they are gold and my world is at war. "Ecco, signore," and I placed the little purse in his hand.

He opened it and spread the coins out wonderingly to the curiosity and delight not only of my own compartment but of the small crowd in the corridor who, hearing words pass between a passenger and a customs official, meant to lose nothing of the excitement of a possible fray. Even my Swede roused herself and eyed us hungrily. Was I, arch-enemy of her rest, to be discredited and she to be reinstated in public opinion as having been the first to guess at my inherent perfidy?

"Very well, signora, I shall be here again in a few minutes." The customs officer gave me back my gold and passed on. He was away so long that I, feeling somewhat self-conscious in my unaccustomed noto-

riety, slipped out into the corridor to look along the platform and anticipate, if possible, the next move in the game. Just behind the door I stumbled against a tall, handsome *carabiniere* standing there quietly with his arms folded.

"Do you know how long we stop here?"

"Until all the luggage has been passed. There is a good deal to-night."

"I am waiting for the officer." And I told him my tale.

He smiled indulgently. "Signora, I am ut here to mount guard over you."

"Oh," I said, amused, "it is too bad, after all, that I must give up my gold. It is a keepsake."

Now no one, as you know, can make an emotional appeal of any sort to an Italian without being met half-way. He looked steadily at me for a moment and then—in fluent American—"Why did you declare it? It was quite safe in your under pocket. If it was given you for luck I should put it back there."

"But the customs officer has seen it."

"Then put half of it back and only give up

half. If you mix the coins, large and small, he will never remember."

"How on earth do you talk my language so well?"

"I am just back from California for the war. I have been in business there for two years. . . . Have you hidden half, signora, for we must be going to the office."

"No. *Cosa fatta, capo ha.* Let us see it through."

The crowd on the platform was thinning, each passenger anxious to get back to his disturbed slumbers. Our moment had come, my *carabiniere's* and mine. We marched in state the length of the train and into

an office opposite the last compartment, where three men with as much of an official air as an Italian can ever put on—the merely human is so near the surface in them all—sat at a desk. One or two passengers who evidently had been having financial transactions with them were moving away.

One of the officials looked up inquiringly. I repeated my tale for the third time and, having tasted the potency of the emotional appeal, added that I should be happy to keep my gold, since it was not of the currency of the belligerent countries and besides, a keepsake.

Looking at me rather amused and astonished, he said very kindly and much to my amazement: "If you had wished to keep it, gentilissima signora, you should not have declared it. How many *lire* is it worth?"

"I have not the faintest idea."

"What lovely money! Look, Edoardo! Californian, you say?" And he spread it on the table. Then, looking around at his companions: "Does any one know how

much it is worth?" And, wistfully: "What a stupendous currency to have!"

"About a hundred lire each, the big ones; fifty lire the smaller ones," piped up my jailor.

"About! That is all very well. And besides, what is the present exchange? The whole question is there. Does no one know?"

The little office was almost dark and the train gave me a blank, uneasy sense of readiness to be off. Why had they left me till the last? It flashed across me, I confess it to my shame, that they were simply fooling to gain time and that the next suggestion would be confiscation until I should come back that way, or until they could discover the exact value.

"Could you not let it pass, signori?" I ventured. "It is not a large sum and will hardly help the exchequer. You see how pretty it is. I hate to part with it."

"Give me that book, Edoardo." And a fat volume was handed to him. A long finger moved searchingly down several

tightly printed columns. "C-a. . . . C-a-l . . . Californian gold is not mentioned here. That other volume, please." Again the long finger felt its way attentively along the pages. "Neither is it here. Pardon, madama, we have just one more book on rarer coins. If we cannot find it there . . . Quickly, Luigi, the train is going. Get me that fat red book from my desk in the other room."

This time the three heads were close together and three pairs of eyes eagerly scanned the words. "It is useless. What's to be done? Californian gold is mentioned nowhere. Thank you, signora. We cannot cheat you by guessing at the value neither can we cheat ourselves. It is with pleasure we may allow you to keep your beautiful foreign gold; we know it is always pain to part with a gift." And, with a courtly bow, "Luigi, take the signora back to her compartment and see that she has no trouble with her luggage."

There was no time to be lost. We flew into the baggage room. The magic chalk

mark was put on my trunk and I made a dash for the train.

"*Partenza, partenza,*" shouted the guard. As I put my foot on to the step I pressed a coin into Luigi's hand.

"Impossible, signora, I cannot take it."

"As a keepsake," I smiled back.

"Ah, in that case, *mille grazie e buon viaggio.*" And with a grin, "Lucky they had never been to California."

I tumbled into my place only just in time. The train was moving out of the station. It was only as Luigi's face disappeared that the import of his words flashed over me. How should they know at Chiasso that the Stars and Stripes floats even beyond the Rockies?

"Well?"

"I keep my gold," I answered. "Give me Italy for courtesy."

The young clerk looked pleased, but from the other side came a savage growl, "So like a woman, smiling and polite where men are concerned—butter won't melt in their mouths—but insolent to women, how insolent, you all saw, to me."

A flush of anger rushed to my cheeks. Happily just in time I caught the sympathetic eye of the little maid and laughed. So did she, so did the young clerk, so did the other two. The Swede had lost the game. She stretched herself out her full length, tucked herself well in, used the little maid as effigies on tombs use little dogs, as a last cosy comfort in the draughty vastness of an alien waste, and angrily muttered herself to sleep. But as we all straightened aching backs, did we not owe her sleep at least for the flattering unction of our own self-righteousness? During the night she took her revenge—diving into her crackly paper bags and before each refreshment pulling up the shade and letting the light blaze into our faces.

PASSE-PAROLES

December 5.

PARIS at last. The long, cramped night is over. A cup of the rarely good coffee of the Gare de Lyon restaurant restores my spirits. There are no porters. I leave my things under the eye of a customs official, all now and forever my friends, and run down the station slope for a cab. The first cabman on the stand annexes me. He is old—all men in Paris now are old—magenta-faced, bulbous-nosed, a replica of Ghirlandaio's "Old Man with a Little Boy" of the Louvre, though without his look of tender solicitude. No little boy am I.

The horse, our horse, for there is no escape, is of the same string as Rosinante. He draws the most ramshackle cab I have ever been in, and mine is a long, varied experience—one of those cabs that in the ab-

sence of fares serves its owner as sleeping quarters. I get in. My bulbous-nosed one's blue coat is still rolled up suggestively in one of the corners.

We drive back for my traps, then move off at a snail's pace. But all things end, and we, too, reach the flat kindly lent to me by a friend. It is on the fifth story, a pretty little perch, looking over the deserted gardens of the Austrian Embassy, and decorated with war trophies. On the mantel, empty shell cases and hand grenades; down on the hearth, lumps of shrapnel; on the walls, framed, Von Bülow's proclamation to the men of Liége, inked so heavily and picturesquely as to be decorative were it not for the sinister menace of its words. Opposite it hangs another heavily inked proclamation, also from the German military headquarters, to the people of Charleroi.

This is one of the many dark moments for the Allies. The English and French in Serbia are in full retreat. Greece is doing more than fight against us. Germany seems to have made just the political splash she

needed and, when that job in the Balkans is wiped up, for Rumania hangs in the balance, can she not roll her forces again to the western front and reach even Paris? The papers are pessimistic and, for the first time, as I sit among the trophies, I begin to feel in more than a leading-article contact with the throb of events.

My eye travels round the curious salon ornaments, from a bit of bell from Rheims Cathedral to other sharply jagged fragments of metal so heavy for their size. Even safely tucked away in this little room one's imagination stirs and shudders. How unrelated those sharp edges are to the almost amoeba-like softness of human flesh. Under what magic do shrinking nerves on all fronts, moving in masses, or as single men, defy them again and again in their bleak negation of familiar human values. They make me wonder how bravely the soldier's vaunted lack of imagination plays him fair in the teeth of such brutalizing lumps, especially when the menace is not at the door of his own home, nor

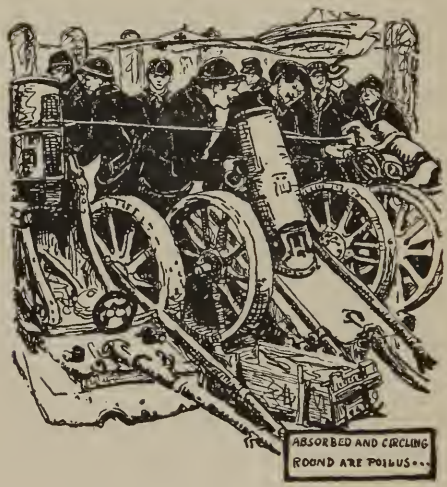
the goad of a devastated hearth under his eyes.

Paris is spotted with crape. Mannequins in the show-windows of the Grands Magazins de Nouveautés offer with equal art, on one side, bright new uniforms, alluringly decked out with stripes and made to fit dapper young bodies, smart képis and trim kits; on the other, all grades of feminine mourning—the coquettishly becoming and still aspiring taking the lead, the blank, crushed, plain, cheap black heedless of form or wile bringing up the rear.

In an inner courtyard of the Invalides guns and fragments of guns of all kinds, bones of Zeppelins, and motorless corpses of various aircraft, are on show. Absorbed and circling round and round are *poilus* at home on leave. Most of the spectators, curiously enough, are poilus. One would have thought they had had their fill elsewhere. Perhaps the blind, burrowing accomplishment of modern warfare reserves for home a convincing sight of the enemy.

In the Petit Palais, for a franc, we can

wander past the glories of the tapestries of Rheims and other relics now doubly precious as we find them ours again after their hair-breadth escape from plundering hands.



The sunshine gleams on the gilding of this our entrenched camp, but we play no new-sought answering facets. We are irresponsive, self-centred, silent. There are no clanking motor busses, hardly any trams. At all subway stations large, sombre, funnel-shaped crowds are greedily sucked in, or

shot out fanlike and scurry away. Taxis carry the more fortunate. The streets are dark at night, except where blue shadows over rare lamps throw wan circles of light on to the pavements. Ostentatious joy and its votaries make their profits elsewhere. For once Paris is at home and alone.

I change my Italian money at a bank and am given only sixteen francs for every twenty lire—the backlash of all the fat profits made on American money changed in Italy. I even, in answer to an appeal, disgorge my showy "Californian" coins, dropping them into the Banque de France and thus earn, all too easily, as gilding of the dull-looking exchange, a souvenir certificate for patriotic devotion to the République.

Then follow days of *démarches.* The *permis de séjour*, given up three months earlier on my way to Italy, has not been sent back from the frontier. After much speech I am allowed to remain until inquiries can be made—happily long enough for my present need. But there must also be a *permis de départ* and small rope-pullings of all sorts—

to the Embassy for a letter, to the Invalides, to the Préfecture, which last has at least the advantage of being near Nôtre Dame into which I steal trying to make more vivid to myself the tragedy of Rheims than by the repetition of forcible adjectives that now slip so facilely from our tongues. A depressing verdict from the inner office of my temporary Commissariat de Police, that by no means shall I with "born in Budapest" written on my passport ever be admitted to the war zone, damps my spirits. What, not even with a special order from the D. E. S. and all my papers in order? "Try it, madame, but you might as well give it up at once and save yourself trouble." At last in despair I go to Headquarters and all difficulties vanish. Always go to Headquarters. That is quite a tip to remember whenever you are most harassed by the creative genius for obstruction of lesser bureaucratic ways. Yet they are only too right to be careful. How often have I not looked on critically and found them over-lenient in presence of certain suspicious earmarks—hints for in-

stance of Teutonic birth unconsciously flaunted by furtive pairs of boots. In peace times I have sometimes played a game with myself, guessing in trains and subways at my neighbours' nationality by their boots and war has sharpened the scent. But one does not like to be practised on oneself, because one's mother happened to be in Hungary on a particular day in September.

December 11

This afternoon, when I got home, an official-looking document begs me to call again at my Commissariat de Police "on an important matter." I search my conscience for a possible crime and hurry off at once to put an end to suspense. Has something cropped up which may at the eleventh hour bar me from the war zone? In making up my *dossier* they have found my genealogy faulty. Will I be good enough to give them the names of my maternal grandparents——

For all the démarches, the shopping, the rush, how quickly the slowest wheel revolves. We wait and wait. Suddenly the

moment is here, it is past; the ground has crumbled behind our heels into unfathomable depths and, for all it concerns us, yesterday is comparing notes with the yesterdays of Napoleon.

Moving On

December 12.

I am up at six, dress by candle light, snatch a stale roll and a cup of tea which play in and out of the last packings and the strapping-up of my holdall, and listen for a step on the stairs. "*Ça creuse*," an old model I once knew used to exclaim after such a meal. There is no sound. I lug the holdall down five flights. Is the concierge awake? The taxi is not there. "What would you? This is war," he shrugs sleepily. We are far from tram or underground. Something must be done. "Get me anything you can find and quickly, please."

The wait in the biting, half-misty morning air seems interminable, until my messenger drives up with another of those sluggish

one-horse cabs. They seem to be enjoying their own St. Martin's summer on the *rive gauche* just now.

"Can we make it in time?"

"I think so."

"Hurry up, cabby; to the Gare de l'Est."

We are breaking into a trot when a violent jerk at the reins stops us. I crane my head out of the window and see a friend doubling after us. She has come to see the last of me. She jumps in and we are finally off.

Both of us are up earlier than usual and both flurried. We begin to discuss, of all soothing subjects, the final good of war. She is just back from the front and from the hopelessness of patching people up only to be killed or further mutilated when they don't want to be either—people, she has it, who are mostly filthy, sordid, grotesque, smell bad, and have personally neither interest in the cause nor detachment enough for heroic action.

"Heroism in war is nothing but a reflection from above—imitation or coercion—not

skin-deep and therefore of no value to the individual."

Can mere gregarious living escape that indictment, I wonder, to say nothing of religions, governments, organizations. If too much cannot be said against war and its brutal robbing of Peter to pay Paul, what may not be said of our peace-time smug indifference to the loathsome diseases of labour, to the callous slaughter of our streets, to the filth of innumerable occupations imposed by our greed? Such useless dead waste of life is not less blunting, though it takes longer, our vision is less focussed, and a diagnosis more baffling. Perhaps the inexorableness of the war test forces a self-revelation upon us such as generations of easy-going prosperity could never drive through the hide of our unconsciousness. Shameless self-interest and cowardly betrayal of the weak lie naked under the white light. Is it not mere stage-fright to speculate now whether the loss and agony of a generation is too high a price to pay for an eye washed clear? We should have thought

of that before sending others to fight for us. It is too late for the many words, for the philosophies of peace. Heroism enough has been liberated to be contagious. We are mortgaged to those who have fallen for our awakening. We may no longer, by confusing the issues, fail them—nor may we forget.

The station is dark. Crowds of soldiers with their mothers, sweethearts, wives, and children, stand about in little groups looking into one another's eyes, or clinging lip on lip. Here and there is the bluff of gaiety and perhaps something of the lightness of leaving monotony for adventure—the daily round for the untried, the unmeasured—as they wait to entrain for the front

Are these the men I shall meet again when their journey and mine are over? I scrutinize them for the first time, and the lumps of shrapnel, the bullets, the hand grenades flash through my mind. I look at the women. They will not be there, but I shall see them as they stand ghostlike behind each of those distant beds. Who was it

that wasted time in argument about a final good of war?

I have carefully provided myself with a ticket for which yesterday I made a special journey across Paris. At every ticket office interminable strings of people wait. My ticket must be stamped at the moment of leaving. I join the most likely-looking queue only to find when my turn comes that, "you must go to No. 9 and pay a tax of twenty centimes."

At No. 9 another long line is patiently standing. But we *are* the train; it waits for us. At last we are off. "*Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre.*"

TOWARD THE FRONT

A Belgian N.-C. officer—his khaki uniform so like that of Kitchener's immortal Mob—and a pretty woman are opposite to me. I stoop to get something out of my hand-bag. A shapely, white-topped boot is furtively placed on his, and through my hat brim I see their lips stealthily come together, Misplaced objects in hand-bags take some time to find. The compartment is not heated; warm lips under the circumstances must taste rather good.

A hoar frost veils all colour; the pale winter sunshine has given up the struggle to reach us, and the day is settling down to its portion of blank gray mistiness out of which bare tree shapes and telegraph poles quiver a moment coldly colourless and are gone. A few shadowy women are working in the fields, and from time to time a gun with its horizon-blue servants bobs up and disappears.

At Amiens a train has emptied on to the platform its load of men fresh from the trenches. They seem a jumble of regiments and are spattered with mud from head to foot. Some look very ill, all are deeply lined as from great strain and fatigue. We look away from their eyes, shrinking from what must be photographed there. One is barefooted on the cold flags; his dirty, blue, swollen feet give me a shooting, sympathetic shudder. Did he leave his boots in some sudden *alerte*, or was it only that they would no longer go on to such swollen feet? Around this driftwood of war is certainly no trace of the glamour of a Meissonier or the *fanfaronnade* of a Detaille. These seared, grimy men are in every variety of costume—scarves round their heads in place of lost caps; sky-blue, knitted helmets, made by kindly romantic fingers; torn coats and sweaters—and their hands are deformed by chilblains. They are dishevelled, abject, promiscuously huddled together; yet unbroken, as they good-humouredly smile at one another's little jokes and wait for a

tardy train to take them for a time to rest and safety.

An intricate, frosted arrow-pattern dims our windows, then spitting rain. The mist is dispersed and we begin to see an endless sky-line broken only at one point by an ugly new windmill, its colour washed bright against the thick gray sky.

A woman on my left with coronet and monogram on her luggage says a few words to me. She has been home on leave and is going back to her hospital at Calais very reluctantly.

"One cannot stand it for long."

Her "it" dismays me. How soon shall I flatten my nose on the hoardings of my own endurance? War makes one conscious of a tremor of excitement tingeing the undertone of our quietest moments—a perennial secret hope somewhere, somehow not to fail oneself, or no more, perhaps, than the fascination of possible danger about which we have been told so much.

Everywhere is a sense of loneliness and emptiness. A solitary crow glides on the

wing diagonally, raises both wings and alights, feet foremost, on the ploughed field, like a gull on water. It alternately rains and sleets. I feel restless and oppressed and go out into the corridor to shake it off. A nice young Canadian in khaki comes up to me and we stand together looking out. He is attached to one of the hospitals and talks to me of his friends and of some of the lively moments in their work.

The Plight

A telephone call for a car came from a certain dressing station. Edward Frost, a Canadian ambulance boy, was told off to answer it. When he arrived, five men—sappers—were huddled into his ambulance and another—a sixth—was slipped into the vacant seat at his side. The enemy had countersapped them and the explosion, though it did not reach them had blocked up the mouth of the tunnel in which they were working. They had been buried, and without food or drink, for four days before they were found and rescued.

Between the dressing station and the hospital, to which he was told to take them, was a stretch of road during the last few days constantly under shell fire. He started with his load and without lights, feeling his way through the night by dimly recognized outlines of trees, bends in the road, and all-too-familiar ruts and holes.

Past a small bridge they began to climb gently rising ground. There was a whang! and a shell whistled over their heads.

Frost threw in the high-gear. He listened uneasily. What was the engine up to? The men inside the ambulance were unusually noisy and our driver's sharpened senses bebecame conscious that their speech was strangely broken. One voice seemed to be softly chanting words rhythmically repeated. Frost strained his ear to catch them as they droned on, the last syllable swallowing the first in a monotonously linked cycle of sound.

"Generals-captains, colonels-captains, emperors-captains, sapeurs-sapeurs! Colonels-majors, sergeants-majors, emperors-majors, sapeurs-sapeurs!

"Adjutants-sergeants——"

"Sssh," hissed a voice; "you'll wake my wife and her Sunday will be spoiled!"

This was interrupted by a peal of derisive laughter and hands banged on the ambulance behind his head. Suddenly Frost caught his breath. There it was again—yes, this time unmistakably—an ominous little tapping, hammer-like tapping of the motor. It was almost madness to go on. Yet once at the top and a mile farther on there would be comparative safety for repairs. It was a toss-up. He would take the risk.

"Generals - captains, colonels - captains, emperors-captains," began to throb in his blood as they flew along. The man beside him was acting very queerly. Frost glanced furtively at him. There was terror in his face and his eyes were fixed on the sky. Suddenly he ducked and threw an arm protectingly over his head, remained crouching for a few moments, a humped-up, panting heap; then straightened himself out, peering into the distance,

paused a moment, and repeated the whole cringing straightening-out movement again and again. If he would only speak! But no word from him broke their silence. Between horror that the man would lose his balance and fall out, and anxiety to get them all into safety, Frost kept the corner of a fascinated eye on the strange gymnastics at his side while he picked his way along the treacherous road.

Half-way up the slope, thud, thud, thud—and the motor stalled. There was a yell from inside: "*Sacredieu!* he stops!" The fan-belt had slipped. Frost climbed down and looked round apprehensively. The curtain-doors of the ambulance were bulging. Then a hand pushed through and unhooked them and five men scrambled out. All were naked. In the clear dark night they seemed to his superconsciousness the conspicuous centre of a deep purple glass ball. The neutral stars winked coldly safe in their immense dome. Another shell whistled past not ten yards from where they stood. Frost felt for a moment like a pitiful mimick-

ing reflection of his cowering companion. Whose teeth were chattering, the pantomime actor's or his own? Together their eyes swept the shadowless waste. There was no cover anywhere. He was alone on that road with six madmen.

Opening the tool-box he fumbled for his monkey-wrench . . .

At Etaples my friendly Canadian gets down. We pass a prison camp and I catch

sight of a man holding his hands up over his head, and of a big chap in kilts doubling back and forth. What can Etaples, which has meant so much to me in the past with its beautiful absinthe swamps and its hysteric, overflowing river, ever mean to me again but two arms that will never be lowered and a big man in kilts forever running out his punishment against blotchy gray-and-green sand dunes?

How desolate the under-canvas hospitals must be now. The canvas sags and strains and water drips from its edges.

Calais is crowded with troops. It is nearly dark when we arrive and are asked to show our papers. We are told they are all right. Then just as we are taking our places in the Dunkirk train, another official looks us over and sends us off to form part of a long waiting line for a visé to our *laissez-passers*. When at last our turn comes our *laissez-passers* after all need no further visés. But by that time it is growing late. The lady with the coronet and I find ourselves stranded. We have only time to snatch a

sandwich and a stick of chocolate—my first food since that unsatisfying breakfast (was it no longer ago than this morning?)—and hurry to take our places in one of those small, old-fashioned carriages with coach-like windows. Most of its inmates are officers, who vie with one another in the vivid details they give of their holiday or their work. No one seems anxious to be back on that shadowy front. One officer, thinking the gossip is taking an unpatriotic turn before strangers, talks the others down.

At Dunkirk I am literally pounced on by two stern officials and again ordered to show my papers. Not a flaw this time. The officials are all politeness. In a few moments I am driving through the now-almost-deserted streets of the town to the "Chapeau Rouge"—a big bare *hôtel de province* with a deep *porte-cochère* and a courtyard, bare wooden floors, and low-stepped, wide wooden staircases.

I am numb with cold and fatigue. The red carpet in my room, the running hot water, the pleasant dinner at a little table

by myself, soon thaw me. There is only one other woman in the room, also at a little table alone. She is tall and fine-looking. All the other tables are crowded with military and naval men in uniforms of all colours. Some of them pause as they pass to say a word to the distinguished woman. I discover later that she superintends the buffet at the station for the *évacués* as they pass through on their way from camp to base hospitals.

So this is the war zone. A couple of days ago bombs were dropped on the town. I fall asleep in a little flutter of anticipation.

ARRIVAL

December 13.

THE curator of an English museum, mobilized as a chauffeur, a man over forty, bronzed and kindly, comes from the hospital to fetch me.

I am taken first to introduce myself to the Colonel and be given a safe-conduct. I find myself in an outer office with bare wooden floors, a map of the war zone, and the already familiar: "*Taisez-vous, méfiez-vous, les oreilles ennemies vous écoutent*" on the walls. Two or three military men write at tables.

"The Colonel will receive you."

The inner office communicates no sense of hurry or importance, yet all the responsibility for the movement of troops, the commissariat, the great business of passports and pass-papers of all sorts—and how enu-

merate the rest?—for this whole region move through it and under the eye of the quiet, kindly, middle-aged man who sits at a large table in the centre of the room. His pleasant voice and quiet dignity, the orders given to his secretary about some pressing matter and about my papers, put me immediately at my ease, and the limpid simplicity of his French gives me the reassuring illusion of being there, too, within my depth.

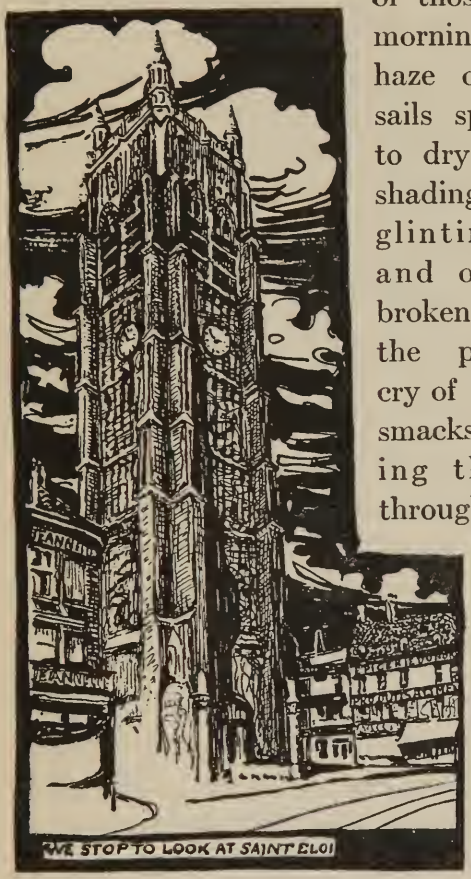
Apparently the true French gentleman at least, capable and disinterestedly helpful —fruit of generations of self-restraint and intellectual flexibility—comes undistorted even through a military uniform with its self-assertive buttons.

The new pass-paper that he hands me gives me the right to a single ride, and only on the hospital ambulance now standing at the door of the D. E. S. There is evidently to be no individual vagrancy here. Inside the ambulance are an English nurse and the wife of a soldier who died yesterday. She has come to town to buy her mourning and a bead wreath for the funeral. I take

my place by our driver. We have commissions to do for the hospital. As we pass we stop to look at the damage done to St. Eloi by the bombardment of seven months before. There is "No Admission," but repairs are busily afoot. The streets this morning are full of soldiers, sailors, military cars of all sorts, and ambulances. It is market day and the sketchy, brightly coloured stalls of fruit, earthenware, and dress stuffs, are set up in crowded rows as in times of peace. It is a varied and hustling scene. Our shopping finished, we are purring slyly past the sentinels at the town gates, when we are halted to show my papers. I begin to feel of some importance in this zone where every one has his tag.

In a few minutes we shall be in Belgium. The flush of being singled out, one of a few, to stand, as it were, for a moment by the bedside of a friend undone by his own chivalry, stirs me. How different it will be from the unconscious Belgium, rosy, healthy, and bustling, I knew at Bruges and at Zoute—when, tired, I had sought her

strength among the sand dunes two years ago. My memory lingers over the peace of those autumn mornings—a sun haze on sturdy sails spread out to dry and half shading piles of glinting fish—and of nights broken only by the penetrating cry of the fishing smacks squawking their way through the fog along the coast where German guns now lie ambushed.



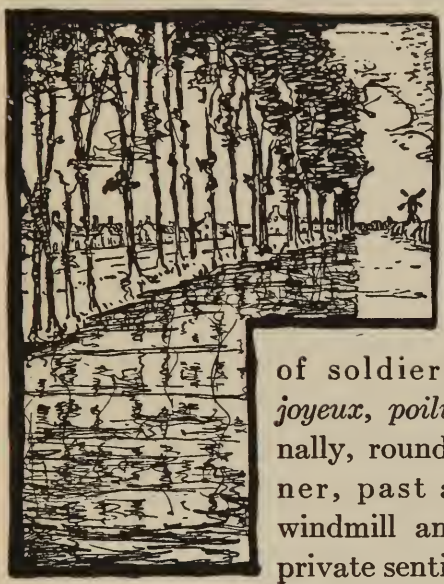
Away from city

walls and from the challenge of sentry, a soldier asks us for a lift. We have no right to take him in but we stretch the letter of the law. He sits on the step at my feet. The air cuts our faces, stings our noses and ears, numbs us. A chilling white mist freezes our breath and sucks up the horizon.

We speed along by the canal, lying on our left, shapes of its white, tranquil surface flicking in and out of a railing of poplars as coyly nonchalant as though its branching waters did not hide imprinted in their sluggish depths the agonized faces of Poperinghe, Ypres, Armentières, Furnes, Lille, and Dixmude. On our right, little villages flit past with their gaily washed stone cottages and their own sleepy backwaters of canal—so like the Baertsohn etchings of a past generation.

Here and there a bombardment has violently broken up the wayward symmetry of quaint squares and dumpy streets, and its paroxysm has passed leaving suffocating heaps of débris and callous exposure of intimate domestic detail.

A kindly finger points out the "sights"—my first view of trenches gashed in the flats along the roadside and of barbed wire entanglements, all the landmarks of a long drive later to become so poignantly familiar. On we fly, passing straggling companies of soldiers—zouaves, *joyeux*, *poilus*—until finally, round a last corner, past a high old windmill and our own private sentinel, we turn sharply into the hospital enclosure, the tricolour fluttering over its gate.



The family is at dinner and gives us a kindly welcome and, what we need even more, hot soup. There is to be a great reunion of doctors this afternoon from all

the countryside to discuss the treatment of clots of blood in hæmorrhage and results obtained from the transfusion of blood.

The soldier whose widow arrived with us is to be buried at 2 P.M. I change quickly into my nurse's dress and the life of a field hospital closes around me.

THE SOLDIER'S FUNERAL

Out of the endless muddy plains of western Belgium choose some three hundred yards, rather more muddy than the rest, and round them draw with a loose-jointed compass—so that the curve may wobble here and there and try more than once to escape at a tangent—a thick, black line. Press on your point until it sinks into the soft mud and your outline becomes a ditch. Then out of the sticky, fertile, inner rim of your ditch, draw up a hawthorn hedge, eight feet or so in height, and you have the site of our field hospital.

On one side of this sticky field is a space given up to cars and ambulances, and known as the yard. It is bounded on its northeast side by low, ramshackle wooden shacks—one, open in front, the car-shed; the others closed and serving severally as cabins for the chauffeurs, storehouse, coal bin, and

mortuary chapel. Between the mortuary chapel and the next shack there is a space roofed over with planks to form a covered way which, in turn, opens upon a margin of our field and, through a low wooden door in the hedge, out on to the deeply rutted village road.

The little chapel is hung all round and curtained in with unbleached calico, haunted by a taint of gangrene. A plain wooden cross hangs on the east side, and in the centre are trestles on which the bodies awaiting burial are laid—first in their shrouds, later in their plain deal coffins covered with the tricolour of France. These coffins—the lowest terms to which this, the last need of man, has been reduced—can be knocked together in twenty minutes the carpenter boasts.

As I passed along one end of the yard I saw a group of poilus, their helmets on, their faded, mottled, horizon-blue overcoats looped back, their guns at rest with bayonets fixed. The supply wagon, that serves us as a hearse, stood under the covered way

in front of them, while at one side, leisurely putting a stole on over his uniform and preparing to officiate at a funeral, was one of our mobilized priests.

A nurse, in her dark blue cloak, the small red cross on her white head-dress, stood a little apart from the rest, waiting.

"Laloux is to be buried," she whispered, "won't you stay with me?"

I have just arrived and the edge of emotion is cutting. Quietly we stand together, while the stretcher bearers go behind the curtains and presently reappear, carrying the coffin, which they slide into the supply wagon. On each of our coffins, for all decoration, is nailed a metal cross, and tenderly enough—allowing for the wear and tear of daily repetition—are laid a small wreath of yellow immortelles and a bunch of artificial, rain-proof Parma violets.

Silently we fall into place: first, an orderly, carrying a long, thin, plain deal cross; then the soldier-priest in his stole, a half-open breviary in his hand, a finger in the burial service; then three soldiers abreast,

with guns and bayonets fixed; behind these, the improvised hearse drawn by two shabby horses, with three more soldiers, on each side, in single file, three abreast immediately following. Twelve soldiers in all, twelve guns, twelve bayonets fixed. Behind the soldiers the stretcher bearers, followed by the solitary mourner who has come a twenty-four-hour journey to arrive too late, but not too late for death. After her walk nurses, officials, orderlies—any one who likes, out of curiosity or piety, to join our straggling procession.

The gray, desolate day seems grayer and more desolate as we pick our way across puddles and ruts, trying to catch a rhythm in twelve heavy marching feet and oscillating iron-bound wheels on rough-worn cobble stones. On, past the diminutive wayside chapel outside our farthest gate; round a bend in the road where the dilapidated windmill stands, raised on its high platform against the sky, and dragging ragged sails in monotonously repeated, jerky circles; on and on into the little village of one street,

over the bridge that spans the canal, with its half-inundated banks which turn broken mirrors up to a glowering sky. This canal is famous now, and will be famous as long as

the history of Belgium is told, for the heroic resistance put up behind the scant refuge of its inhospitable banks to the untiring attacks of merciless gray hordes.

Most of our men—many of them, I am told, old territorials ordered there to beat time, as they themselves would say, and because in that "hot corner the less precious lives might best be thrown away"—were

wounded within a few hundred yards of the bridge across which, to the heavy rhythm of tramping boots, we carry them dead.

On and on we go, meeting weary convoys who—as they trudge in an opposite direction, conscious that their turn may be the next—pay tribute by their expressionless faces and the dire simplicity of their salute, to the elemental dignity of death.

We reach the little market at last, turn sharply to our left, and pass into the village church. There we pause for a part of our burial service—for the swung censer and the holy water sprinkled alike on living and on dead. Out and on through the north door to the farthest edge of the little churchyard, where, circling a third of the space, row on row, four abreast, rough black wooden crosses, high as a man, tell their tale.

On the back of each cross, the name, rank, and regiment are written. Over the upright stay of each hangs our little wreath of yellow immortelles; at the crossing of the arms the bunch of artificial violets which, if not fragrant as other violets are, give forth the

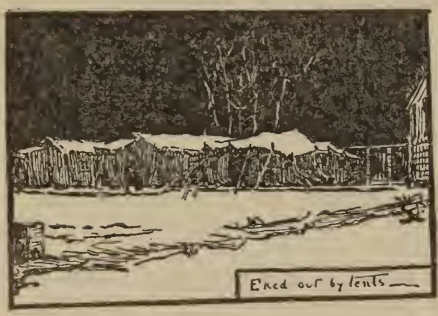
faint perfume of man's sympathy, man's intention, struggling for expression. Row on row, four abreast—and now we add another to the number—with orange sand thinly sprinkled and tidily raked round each, lie our dead, each name a high-water mark of human endurance, while around and above, behind, beyond, and before, floats the immensity of gray desolation.

TAKING A LOOK ROUND

After the funeral and the medical debate —and a debate may be vitally interesting when practice dogs the heels of theory as breathlessly as it does here—we have tea in a little shack, half dining-room, half salon. Piles of toast are freshly made on the bright coal fire by the nurses as they drop in and out, or by the volunteer ambulance drivers who, in this pause, through puffs of smoke, tell one another the news of the day.

We are on the very edge of Belgium, some five miles from the firing line, and only such of the wounded are brought to us as may not without danger be carried farther. On my way from the churchyard I had taken a look round. Within the space encircled by our hedge there are sixteen wooden shacks in all, eight of them wards in which about one hundred and forty patients can be cared for. Among the other sights

Miss Carr (or "Night Hawk," as the Canadian nurse, my companion at the funeral, humorously calls herself) had pointed out to me the operating room with its radiographic cabinet, the pharmacy, the *salle d'attente* or waiting room, the wash-house with the linen room or *lingerie*, and the doctors' quarters. The remainder, eked out by tents, some gray, some green, are sleep-



ing quarters for the staff. All the shacks and tents are connected by narrow walks or *trottoirs* which thread quite picturesquely back and forth across our muddy enclosure.

After tea I take possession of the curtained-off portion of one of the shacks shared by three. This corner is to be my

shelter. Privacy is almost as far from this life as from a camper's. On the other side of a divided somewhat skimpy curtain is a passage with a door at each end. It does not make so much difference as one might think whether the doors are open or shut. Everything blows, creaks, and flaps together. Even the roofs, as I discovered later, in a high wind sometimes let go their grip of the walls. One feels much as a spider might in a tight crevice of bark with leaves for curtains.

High up in the centre of the roof is the common electric light, usually—as no one here has rigidly regular hours—left burning until 10 P. M., when the lights automatically go out all over the hospital. We are heated fitfully by a coal fire which, lighted in the morning, is left to its own devices or to a chance passing hand for its replenishing. The floor is covered with green linoleum, our greatest asset in the all-permeating dampness of these Belgian plains. I have a bedstead and mattress, exact replica of the soldiers' beds; a small washstand: a

deal cupboard; two canvas chairs; a mirror in a steel frame, one foot by nine inches—not calculated in its oblique summing-up of one's person to increase self-assurance; and, happiest possession of all, a shelf running the whole length of one side of the room to hold our books and odds and ends.

DETAILS

December 14.

The green-painted shacks with their furnishings are the gift of an American woman, Miss de Courtney, to the French Government. She is Golden Godmother and Directress of the hospital and on her devolves the responsibility of choosing and superintending the nurses. The medical staff, orderlies, most of the surgical instruments and appliances as well as the rations are supplied by the French Government and are under the supervision of the *Service de Santé*. The Directress gives me a few details and touches on the psychology of the hospital very lightly, for she is going to take me for a first round of the wards. While I wait for her a shutter snaps in my mind and I see again, ominously vivid, the salon ornaments and the railway station at Paris.

In the evening my job is given to me. I am to take charge of the waiting room and be always within earshot of its three whistles announcing new arrivals; to direct the linen room; order and receive supplies, and write the business letters. Christmas is upon us and the Directress goes on leave on the twenty-sixth. Will I take her place during her absence, preside at the nurses' meals and, in her stead, I seem dimly to perceive, be general whipping-boy? Her berth is, I imagine, not too easy a one, for she must keep a hand on the rudder and steer straight in this lake of slight but fundamental racial differences of method, of ideals and their implication. Evidently being at a field hospital is not, for me, to mean primarily caring for wounded soldiers. I fall asleep rather uneasily in my cot.

December 15.

During the night I was awakened with a start by the light going up in our shack. A man was brought to the hospital who had to be operated on immediately. He was

drunk, had refused to give the password, and had attacked one of the sentinels who shot him through the abdomen. He has just died murmuring, "*Maman, Maman.*" One of the nurses tells me this is extraordinarily often these men's last word.

He was a big strong chap of twenty-five or so and, had he lived, it would have been to be court-martialled. After my first visit to the wards—this. A sense of the fragility and cheapness of life overwhelms me.

The Linen Room

December 16.

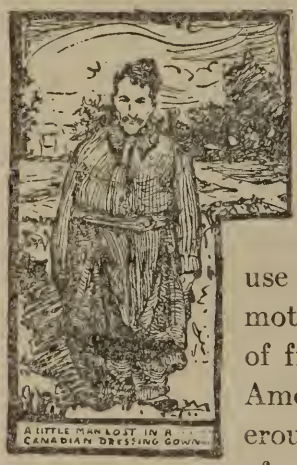
There is a rift in the lute this morning. The mobilized Franciscan monk, M. Baron ——, a devoted, capable man, twin-pillar (with his friend, the priest, genial, witty M. Tessac) of the wash-house and the linen room—is to be removed by the War Office. He keeps the accounts, knows all the ropes, and is invaluable to the Directress generally and to me in particular, for was he not to take my inexperience and point out the way

to me through the intricacies of this part of my work?

Steps will be taken to try and keep him—démarches again. They sprout everywhere like toadstools at the roots of conflicting personal interests.

I spend a busy afternoon being crammed by M. Baron in the organization of the linen room. Besides Baron and Tessac, there is a dear, hard-working girl, Marie, a Belgian refugee, through whose clever fingers most of the mending and darning passes. There is a basket under the table where she works, into which torn and buttonless things from all over the hospital are put, always with a joke and "for one of your spare moments, Marie." Two or more afternoons a week another workwoman comes to help with the patching of the uniforms and underclothes that have been slit up for the first bandagings at the dressing stations, or cut and torn when taken off the severely wounded in the waiting room. These clothes are disinfected and washed, then repaired and given back to their owners the day they leave us

for a base hospital or, as often, given to some one else, since their owners not infrequently move on before the clothes are ready—a shifting of possessions which brings about the pathetic and humorous parade of misfits daily passing through our salle d'attente.


A LITTLE MAN LOST IN A CANADIAN DRESSING GOWN

The French Government replaces all uniforms too badly damaged for further use and the Golden Godmother, with the help of friends in England and America, has very generously set herself the task of seeing that the men who pass under her care shall have, not only the best surgical aid and nursing possible, but a full outfit of warm and suitable clothing. Compared to most other field hospitals ours is luxurious and pampered, taking delight even in the colour scheme of each of its wards. To provide for these needs

is the principal work of the lingerie, which is something like a little shop where everything—from bandages, needles, chocolate,

and cigarettes, to crutches, warm sweaters, nails, toothbrushes, combs, mirrors, and slates—is to be found. Cases and bales arrive every month from London bringing

us supplies, even pyjamas, which the poilus look upon as a form of swanky sport suit to be worn only out-of-doors on sunny days, never in bed.

We have to keep up big fires and constantly move our possessions about to fight encroaching mildew, for not only is the lowest dampest edge of the field our portion, but steam from our nearest neighbour, the wash-house, filters under the door and through all the cracks, defying the tarred paper with which we have tried to barricade ourselves against its inroads.

The nurses drop in and out searching our stores to humour the wide-swinging needs of their patients, and all day long orderlies, the lists of linen sent from their wards to the laundry in their hands, come with their baskets to be replenished from our shelves.

From the windows, through blots of scarlet geraniums, we have a bird's-eye view of the nearest village, with the spotted reptile of continually moving troops crawling through its single straggling street.

The spirit of our linen room is gay and

charming. If the present *personnel* remains unchanged, I shall enjoy my work here very much.

The nursing staff of the "Boîte"—as we call the hospital, by reason of its boxlike, circumscribing limits—consists of three American, one Australian, three English, and three French nurses, with from ninety to a hundred orderlies and lesser officers variously employed.

Later.

After tea there is a carol practice. The Directress has a sweet voice. One of the French nurses, Madame de Parme, plays the accompaniments *con amore;* another, Mademoiselle Basine, takes seconds. She has no more than a good note or two, but all the Latin vocal formulas. It goes. The other nurses join in the refrains.

Cannon have been going all day—British cannon preparing for an offensive they say. And report also has it that the Germans are massing on this front.

SHADOW PICTURES

December 17.

The Directress is of medium height with a wide, pale, young face and clear, golden-brown eyes. A becoming large lawn handkerchief folded diagonally and tightly fastened round her head lets only little loops of hair escape above her ears. She evokes sympathy and interest by a something which though nunlike carries no sense of convent walls. Under a certain languor of manner she is executive. Yet—artist and moralist in one—she is lovable. Her honesty struggles with her aspirations, as the artist in her guesses at many sides of a question. To keep a steady hand on the reins of government an administrator should, perhaps, wear blinkers. But how can the floating eye of an artist keep them on?

The temperament of Madame de Parme,

playfully dubbed "Moral Influence," gives her weight here. She is of sound French lineage, flying highly coloured kites of chivalric tradition, and related, it would seem, by virile, widespread ramifications of uncles, aunts, and cousins, to half the aristocracy of France. Dark and very pleasant to look at, her simple nurse's dress worn with the trim formfulness of her race, she is warm-hearted, impulsive, staunch to her friends, generous and devoted to the men. She is also—must I own it?—not without her touch of vanity which glories in frankness of speech, unassailable righteousness, and the safety of her anchorage below the shoals of mere social veneer or wealth. Her impetuous partisanship restlessly seeks for motives in waste places and the pollen of her quick, perhaps too irresponsible, tongue is apt to be carried on the hurrying feet of the Boîte and easily crossbreeds.

Her friend, Mademoiselle Besine, a professional woman, is big and blonde with a broad, open face and blue eyes. She has a vaguely barer family tree than has Moral

Influence, but a stronger head. She is very capable, generous-hearted, fair-minded, somewhat arrogantly unconscious of the limits of her own prerogatives perhaps, for when perplexed by administrative ways the tip of her witty tongue is capable of a bitter sting. But she is a pleasant companion, fond of books, and enjoying a good comradeship with many of their writers, born of her life in Paris. Of her the doctors say: "*Quand il y a trois hommes et Basine, cela fait quatre*," and it is meant as a compliment.

Madame Thomas, the third of our French nurses, is the wife of a sergeant in the trenches, from whom our *vaguemestre*—anxiously laid in wait for by us all—brings her a daily letter. She is a self-effacing, self-sacrificing, kind little woman with a *Croix de Guerre* of her own, won in a hospital in Poperinghe during the first of its terrible bombardments. Not a nurse by profession, she has been trained by the war and, though without any of the energetic initiative of Moral Influence or La Basine, she is painstaking and reliable. Her tiny figure, barely five

feet high and all in white, is further dwarfed by a pair of large black rubber waders without which she never ventures from her room on the farther side of a neighbouring muddy field where she has taken up her abode, for she looks with suspicion on our more or less open-air nights. Romantically religious and with a somewhat inflated respect for authority, she feels a maternal concern and herself responsible for the virtues and foibles of those committed to her care.

Within Sight of Christmas

December 18.

Christmas gallops up. Our Golden Godmother has inundated us with bales and cases. I am told off to unpack them in an empty ward and to sort them with the help of a plump little gentleman who in peace times is in the aeroplane business. He is middle-aged and has a not-too-secret pride in his villa on the Riviera and in the life of ease he and an evidently fashionable wife lead there.

His very short arms and unused, chubby hands have an air of flippers, and we know him as "The Penguin." He has been mobilized for more than a year and is the most bored person I have ever met. The administration appoints him my aide-de-camp. We pass the compliments of the season and then stand looking at mounds of stuff to be unpacked.

Presently he produces a penknife and begins to open the bales, cutting stitch by stitch and leaving it to me to solve the greater mystery of opening the cases. As coloured balls, tinsel, crackers, and candles come tumbling out in fairy-like profusion and are spread out on the beds, he ambles slowly round, delicately appraising each object and, holding it up to the light, ejaculates: "How curious, how weird! What purpose can it possibly serve?" The incongruity of all this flimsy glitter on a stage grim with the dramas of yesterday and tomorrow perhaps chills a more sympathetic interest in our festive symbols.

There are cigarettes and presents for all

the orderlies and several presents for each of the wounded. Stockings of pink and green tarletan, which are to be filled with sweets, oranges, nuts, and crackers, seasoned with the popular dwarf packets of playing cards, dominoes, and tobacco, are to be hung on the beds to enliven the Christmas-morning awakening. The presents are to be marked with the names of the wounded and for this each nurse must be taken apart and asked to furnish a list of her charges with a word on their characters and tastes. It will take all the leisure of the next few days to sort and label them, and more plastic minds than

the Penguin's to cling to our playthings under the swooping shadow of pain and death.

December 19.

A furious cannonade went on all last night like a heavy bass to bellowing gusts of wind. At first we could distinguish the different calibres of the guns, but it soon turned into a distant bullying roar.

There have been only two operations this morning. A leg was amputated, and splinters of bone were taken out of an adjutant's shoulder. He refused an anæsthetic for, since the outbreak of the war, he has lost a father and a brother on the operating table. Every one was relieved when it was over. He has just been brought back to bed and the doctors feel satisfied that they will pull him through.

WARD I. THE TELEPHONE

He was a telephonist in the trenches and, they told me, the son of a country doctor. Twenty years or so old, with a thick crop of black hair worn rather long, and dark, languid eyes. A beautiful boy and an only son—to the last so delicately careful of his person that the life of the rank and file could have been little less than a crucifixion to him.

He came in with typhoid fever and appendicitis. They operated. Days passed and he grew worse. Those who looked on

called to his father, to his uncle, way-worn men to whom he was all the world. They came. Then a fistula developed and he lay there suffering, irritable, exacting, and alien, while those two forlorn men hung with anxious faces over his bed—No. 9 it was—on which the fight with death was fought by doctors, nurses, and by those two, to whom he was all the world. Another and more terrible operation relieved the strain for a time and gave him back to them, gentle, thoughtful, and full of tales through which flashed the heroism, humour, and patience of the trenches.

For six lagging weeks the sympathy and science of the hospital clung to the chance of saving him, of saving those three lives. But death held on hungrily to him. In his delirium he was back in the trenches again, the receiver in his hand, feverishly active as message after message reached him and had to be sent on.

Suddenly his excitement grew. He was in the fury of bursting shells.

"The Germans are coming! They come!

They come! *Sauvez vous, camarades! Les boches sont là . . . Allô.* No. 129? Yes, I'm still here. What was that? What——"

The pause was strained with the agony of attention. Then the muscles relaxed into a creeping smile and the lips moved again:

"*Ah, ça y est, maintenant. Le bon Dieu est à l'appareil.*"

The boy was dead.

SHADOW PICTURES AGAIN

December 20.

Our Médecin-chef, old M. Lussan, is both soldier and doctor. He is tall and spare, with the long, bowed legs of a cavalry officer, and a great susceptibility to feminine blandishment. He is a family man to the point of being a grandfather, and more interested, perhaps, in the discipline and domestic details of the hospital than in the work of the operating room. His is one of our most characteristic silhouettes, for he keeps an eye on every trifle and is never for long off our stage. No one can leave the hospital without his permission and a pass bearing his stamp, nor can any repair or the smallest innovation be made without his consent. The doctors indulgently support him, for he has a light hand with them, but the orderlies find him stern and uncompromising.

Most of the operations are skilfully performed by M. Chévert, known by the men as "*Le Chic Type.*" Theoretically under M. Lussan, in reality he holds the reins. He is what the French call *un bel homme*—tall, dark, pale, and masterful, with a certain naïve latin satisfaction in his heaven-born male superiority and a mirthless, non-committal smile. He is, moreover, a highly specialized laparotomist and popular with the wounded who dimly divine his science and are cheered by his good-fellowship and by his unwearying readiness to answer their call at any hour of the day or night.

Of our staff is also a short, fair, lonely man with a sad, gentle face. A physician only when the war began, he has become no mean surgeon on his own account and is now right hand to the Chic Type. His is one of the most familiar figures here as he passes, bent on his work, up and down the plank-walks. He is patient with the men and very kind, careful, and "lucky" with his cases. Many a horribly infected wound has healed under his painstaking touch. We

know him as Père Corneiller and call upon him to cure the small ailings of the Boîte. And he comes graciously and willingly but never without that little impersonal air of disillusionment which is so much of himself. Called one day to one of the nurses to stop a feverish cold, he looked wistfully round her little coop with its photographs and intimate touches and sighed: "How feminine and charming this all is!" That started us wondering about him.

Every week the hospital is inspected by M. Muret, inspecteur-général with a title of General by courtesy.

He is an old man of Alsatian origin and accent who never ceases to repeat, "Alas, alas, I knew German as a boy." He is, I think, shrewd rather than intelligent, mettlesome where his dignity is concerned, but thaws easily, becoming friendly and gentle. He does not seem to be popular here. I suppose inspectors never are, but he has, I think, no more than a normal dose of obliquity in his make-up, though he is sometimes in need of ingenuity to patch up the

consequences of his spleen. His teeth are kept sharp on small bones he picks with Moral Influence and La Basine who accuse him of being the tool of his favourites and who make the inspection of their work something of a thorn in the old man's side. We share the honour of being inspected by him with certain sections of the front-row trenches and many other sketchy institutions needing the eye of a paternal government to keep them toeing the line.

He has a great friendship for M. de Précy—of rather wooden build and perhaps over-conciliatory manner—his pupil in good old bygone days in Bordeaux, now chief surgeon of one of the auto-chirurgical or mobile operating rooms, which with others of its kind has cost France so many thousand francs. This *auto-chir*, as they are called, has a staff of its own of fifteen doctors and surgeons, and a complete radiographic and surgical outfit. But almost since the outbreak of the war, by some kink in the administrative tape, it has stood idle and not more than a stone's throw from our

gates. The Directress had offered its fifteen doctors, when she knew of their plight, two of our wards to do with them as they pleased, nurse their own cases, make their own researches. She had even gone so far as to say that they might be free of our operating room to help there whenever there was a rush and share with our very own doctors the much-coveted surgical experiences of the front.

THE SALLE D'ATTENTE

4 P.M.

We have had a busy day with the bright coloured thread of our bit to do running through it. Miss Wolton (one of the English nurses) and I ask for pass-cards. We must go to the nearest village to buy ribbons and fancy papers to tie up the Christmas parcels. We are just starting when the three whistles sound. Four wounded are brought in. It is my initiation to the work of the salle d'attente—the portal of the hospital—which is to be my principal field of activity here.

The men arrive—huddled, inarticulate bundles of pain and misery with stone-cold

feet and chattering teeth. Their boots and puttees are caked with mud and their clothes stiff with blood and dirt. The bandages that have been put on at the outposts are not removed in the salle d'attente, except in case of hæmorrhage or other especial need, but the men are undressed, laid on beds, and given hot-water bottles. The belongings of each are piled by his bed, and an inventory is taken by the priest-orderly on duty there, another part of whose business it is to officiate at the funerals. If the wounded have any valuables, they are given over, in exchange for a receipt, to the administration, which takes charge of them until their owners leave the hospital. The men's names, their wives' names, their addresses, and the numbers of their regiments are written down. The less valuable contents of their pockets, which we often tell them are like small junk-shops, are emptied into coloured cotton treasure-bags. These follow them to their wards and are hung at the head of their beds. It is in these bags that they keep their most precious trophy of all—

their splinters of shell—when the surgeon is fortunate enough to extract them and they lucky enough to survive the ordeal.

After the doctor on duty has seen them and given his orders, we scrub them thoroughly, as much to warm them as to clean them, though after days in the trenches a scrub is generally only too necessary. When they are washed and a warm cotton-flannel night-shirt has been put on they are wrapped in blankets and packed off to their wards or, in the more urgent cases, to the operating room, there often to lie on their stretchers on the floor awaiting their turn. That, when it happens, seems to me the hardest of all tests of their endurance: the strange faces, smell of ether, passing and repassing of stretchers with their loads, sound of groans, and often sight of blood, of horribly exposed wounds and glinting instruments, before their turn comes round. But they generally arrive in batches and, in a field hospital, space and the number of surgeons are limited. Every one is working at top speed; there can be no breaks, no delays.

The cases must be ready to be taken one after another in the order of their greatest need.

Of the four *blessés* just brought in, it first falls to my lot to wash a boy of twenty-two, Louis, as gay as a cricket—"rather a low type" the nurse who hands him over to me whispers. He has only stumps for toes on one foot, frost-bitten during last winter's campaign. This time he has a bullet wound under his arm, a torn ear, a scalp wound, and ominously bandaged thighs.

I wash all of him that is not bandaged. He boasts of his home, of his aunt, of her money. He tells me his wounds "are of no consequence—all but, perhaps, the thighs." His lieutenant had asked for a volunteer. It was a desperate job and Louis had offered himself. He got through and was on his way back, elated, when a bomb exploded behind him.

"I hope I shall soon be well and get at those boches again."

In the excitement of the feat and of still-overstrained nerves he talks volubly. I

cover him up to rest while two of the others are being washed—one a young boy with a wounded eye who pours out a torrent of curses on every one who comes near him. His eyes are bandaged and he is evidently still frightened. We are strangers. His experience perhaps holds memories of weakness and helplessness not too tenderly dealt with. I wish they would all curse. Had they a background of drawing rooms they would—for our sakes. We might then feel less abashed by their monstrous patience, their disconcerting confidence and gratitude. The forlorn profane one and his friend are carried away to their wards.

We chaff Louis in return for his gay sallies and tell him that, since he says there is so little the matter with him, we are sending his pals on first. He answers:

"Right you are; I can wait; my wounds are nothing, except perhaps the thighs."

The fourth boy, Etienne, with a bad head-wound, is screaming and struggling. The startling pallor of his nude, tossed limbs reminds me of Michelangelo's drawing of

Tityus. He is quieted and sent off to his ward. The last to go is Louis. As he is lifted on to the stretcher he winces and whispers something to one of the kindly bearers whose face grows very grave. All four are of the notorious Foreign Legion.

THE OLD CIVILIAN

December 21.

THEY came up from the village. An old man is ill there. The village doctor is away. Will the Médecin-chef be very good and admit him as a favour to the hospital so near their home? "We cherish, love, and dote on this old man. If no help is to be given us, he will die."

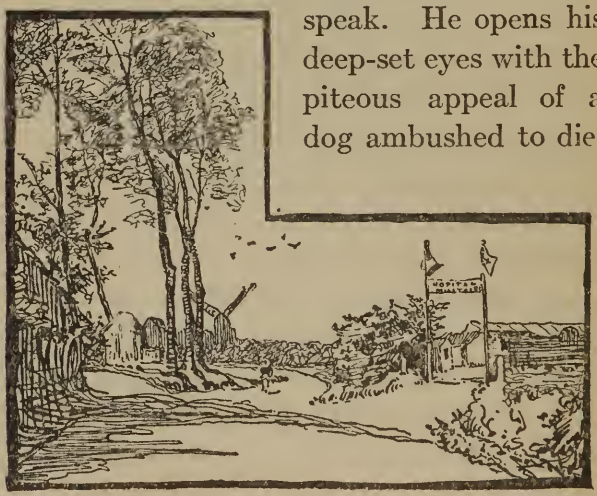
The Médecin-chef says yes. So they bring the old civilian and lay him on a bed. Before we know it they have vanished.

We draw near. The old man is so weak he cannot give his name. We strip him and —turn away our heads.

He lies on the bed before us all, abject in the wantonness of his emaciation. The brazen bones and sinews raise and stretch the withered yellow skin into ridges with gray hollows in between and push their

joint-heads through red raw spots in its tenuous fragility. The prism-shaped limbs end in fans of long, spiked finger nails and turned-up, horn-spiked toes. The head, with what had once been a gentle, large-eyed face, is tasselled with spears of gray hair grounded now with filth. Filth cakes his body—filth oozing from within, filth grinding from without, mixed in with dust and wisps of straw squeezed of its moisture and pressed into a compact mass by the dead weight of a helpless body.

We speak to him. The old man cannot speak. He opens his deep-set eyes with the piteous appeal of a dog ambushed to die.



The doctor comes and—turns away.

"Where is his family? He has been starved."

No one can find his family.

"Who will take him in? We cannot keep a starved old man. We are not here for that."

The village shuts its lips. No one knows where he came from, no one will take him in. He is old; he is dying. His horny hands have worked hard while they could. His muscles will contract no longer; there is nothing he can do.

We fetch our basin, our soap, our scissors, our clean, warm towels. We come near him.

The orderly gently lifts the shrunken brittle body. He turns away his head and spits. Yet is not this his father—is not this himself? The nurse dips her glove in the hot water, soaps it, and bends over him. She turns away her head and clears her throat. Here is her mother—here herself—the silent end of long, close years of planning, saving, striving. No one wants him. He has nothing more to offer life. They scrape away the filth; they wash him; they rub the flaccid

skin with alcohol; anoint, powder, hide from sight his dreadful sores. They labour to make him alluring to Death.

He opens his eyes, but he never speaks. Those who brought him in have seen to that. He can never tell on them. They kept him until he could never tell on them. He will play no dirty trick on them, but they can play a dirty trick on us. How sharp those people were. He will not die in their house; no questions will be asked. But he will die in our house.

We have washed away the straw. No one knows from whose stable the straw came.

He is warm and clean and decent and his eyelids are a little stronger. We carry him to a ward. We put him in a bed where the lusty and yearned-for have passed on their way before him.

He clings to life and counts his hours out to the very last. Eleven hours more and then he dies.

There are many kinds of soldiers.

Now he counts among our dead.

IN THE WINGS

December 22.

News comes that the démarches have succeeded and M. Baron is to stay. Every one is pleased, especially I who depend on his help. At dusk I go to the linen room on an errand. Outside I meet one of the mobilized priests. He detains me on the foot path and pours out a tale. A newcomer, I should be forewarned. As he sees the situation, the hospital just now sits on a volcano. The eye of the auto-chir, when turned on us and on our many privileges, gleams, it would seem, very green—too green for the tolerance of our own doctors who look warily askance at the intruders. Only a spark is needed to fire the mine. There is also, he hints, something almost approaching soreness between the French and Anglo-Saxon elements—the French under irksome

obligation to foreign bounty, to say nothing of resentment simmering in the heart of one of their nurses—Madame de Clisson, now absent—to whom it has been intimated that at the end of her leave she need not return.

The situation is anything but simple, for through spokes of wheel within wheel as they revolve in his hands I can catch elusive glimpses of romance, jealousy, and piqued pride plying their fans. Madame de Clisson had not only been hand in glove with the High Command, but with the staff of the auto-chir who—the other French nurses also make it out (and who should know better than they?)—are nothing but unscrupulous place-hunters ambushed behind our hedge and quite willing to play Madame de Clisson's game for her if by so doing they can bait their own lines for stripes. "Perhaps the brimming cup even now trickles over. . . ."

Is all this merely morbid imagination flowering in this somewhat unnatural isolation or do subterranean fires really rumble—and at no great depth—under the mud of our placid-

looking field? I barely yet know the names of these people and am bewildered by their spiritual arabesques, lost in the labyrinth of their reactions. I reassure myself with the thought that truth has many faces and any one of them alone is a lie.

I go for enlightenment to the Directress. As to smarting French susceptibilities, she waves the suggestion from her. It is certainly evident that the auto-chir resents its idleness, but why imagine that it also resents us? In any case, she has done what she could for it and, if there is fault anywhere, it is perhaps a pardonable one in the capable Chic Type and La Basine, both so enamoured of their work that they prefer to slave day and night rather than let doctors from outside take any part.

In my den, behind my curtain, I think it over—the many sides of this situation. Motley race differences lie dormant in us. Here we have a hospital offered by American capital and—yes, accepted. But we all know that to accept is not always as easy as it seems. It may even be possible that

the sensitiveness of French pride sometimes loses sight of the dignity of its need and is inclined to squirm under what may look like patronage—a feeling that shamefacedly translates itself into forms so alien to the original reaction that American capital stumbles in hurt confusion.

Now, the most vexatious part of life in the war zone is the sense of being shut in. Here in the Boîte are about three hundred people, counting the wounded, and the key is figuratively turned on them with their three hundred active minds, their heterogeneous tastes, their varying social conditions, their racial blindness to the other man's problem, and, under it all, the baffling irritation of war with its long-drawn-out, quiveringly suspended menace. Small wonder if at times the ice is thin. A Frenchman can never realize our American fundamental naïveté. He is not simple himself but proud and complex. He is annoyed by what he thinks our incomprehensible lack of reserve and form when it is nothing but a degree of national opaqueness to one

kind of light. The French cherish the bureaucrat in all his forms and numbers. They love discipline in such a place as this.

Young Americans hate restraint. They lightly undertake all that comes their way but somewhat reluctantly go clear-eyed to the logical end of an endeavour. At home our antennæ have not needed to become sensitized to foreign reation; there has been plenty of room for contemptuous indifference and we have little real flexibility. Our facile assumption and self-confidence, our deep, instinctive suspicion of all that is not American, brought cheek by jowl with the keen French mind, its unformulated but rigid traditions of manner and speech, in bottomless reserves, its trenchant intellectualism, its dire thoroughness of method and almost equally strong distrust—to say nothing of its humorous compassion—for all that is not French, put the easy-going Americans at a disadvantage. When not happily unconscious he is irked by what he cannot quite size up. We Americans still trail

nebulous envelopes while pressure has solidified and crystallized the French.

Neither is it easy for us to understand the objective dramatic quality of the French mind. Its unemotional clarity sees life in terms of art. What we crudely sum up in them as dissension even as intrigue is generally no more than the interplay of vivid, sharpened imaginations working themselves out into a witty indulgence of each other's highly individualized and widely varying points of view and a breezy criticism of more phlegmatic reactions.

Evidently I shall have a chance here to indulge my own small passion—just to understand. And what if life at the front, for all its self-denials, should not be without a pinch of its old flavouring? Yet I begin to be a little uneasy about the future. *Vivere non est necesse. navigare necesse est.*

THE CARPENTER

December 23.

"I'M THIRSTY, sister, dying of thirst. Give me a drink. I'm thirsty, oh! so thirsty —a little wine! At home I have a cellar, so cool, and the good country wine quenches thirst. Only a little drink, good sister—a few drops. Why do you refuse? A throatful, and I will say no more."

"My friend, you must be patient. Your turn comes next. They will operate on you presently. After that I will give you wine with a little water—not your good Sarthe wine, perhaps, but the best that we can get for you here. The doctor has promised. Now you must let me give you this. Don't look so scared of the needle. It will hardly hurt you. There! The worst is over, and it will help you to bear your thirst. And if you will be good and not swallow it you

may hold this piece of lemon in your mouth. There, there—is it not better now?"

The poor head moved restlessly on the pillow, first to one side, then to the other. The thin livid lips trembled and continued to wail softly, "Oh, so thirsty—thirsty—thirsty——"

Panquelin, for that was his name, had been brought in during the night, both feet blown to pieces, his card said, by a shell. A violent hæmorrhage had so weakened him that from the first the doctors shook their heads. They would do what they could. Care and his natural sturdiness would have to do the rest.

He was a strange, unsoldierlike looking man, below the average height, black-haired and plump, with a perfectly round head and face in which were set perfectly round, black eyes edged with short, black lashes. The eyebrows seemed parts of a curve almost geometrically drawn, so perfectly round was his brow. His hands were small with short fingers and thick, chubby palms, and the poor chunky lower limbs

were bandaged almost to the hips. All black and white he lay there with drawn, blue lips.

We sat long by his bed waiting, trying to warm and stimulate him, trying to prepare him for what was to come. It seemed to ease him to talk; and in the intervals of his torturing thirst, when his lips had just been moistened, he told me of his home.

"We were five brothers at the beginning of the war. Now I and one other only are left. He is in the trenches. I was cook to my colonel. Last night while we were lighting a fire that infernal shell burst. To think it should reach us there! The scullery boy was killed on the spot, and my feet—I have never seen anything like it—pools of blood! *Ah, cochons de boches! ils m'ont bien*——"

"*Courage, mon vieux*, it may yet be all right. We sometimes do wonders here. You will see."

"You are very good, my sister, but you have not seen my feet. Will you write to my wife for me? I should not like her to be

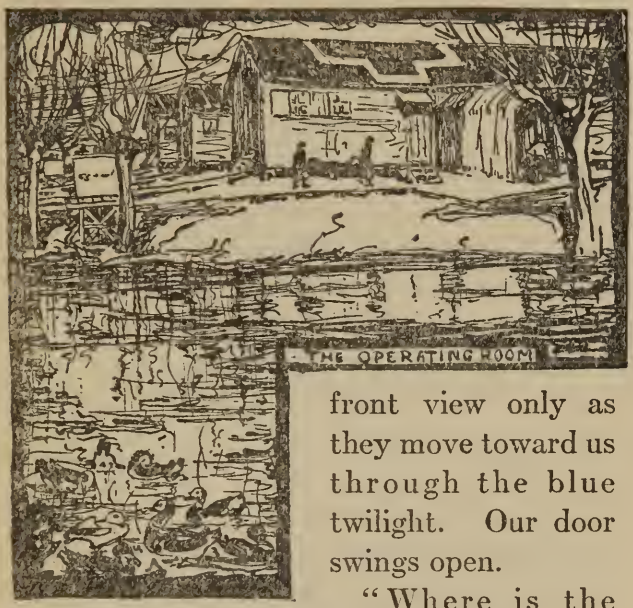
anxious, poor girl. My wound will cause her much chagrin. We have five small children, such a nice little house—two rooms, a kitchen, a cellar, a vegetable garden, too; and I was getting on. Carpenters when they are good can always make their way. You see I mend old furniture. There is so much in our parts and there is money in it."

"What you say interests me. When you are well you shall mend a cupboard of mine which they tell me is old Sarthe."

"Ah, you have a cupboard, an old one? Thick heavy walnut wood, four men cannot lift it? I know the kind well. They make none like that now, all is *Ville de Paris*. I will soon show you what a good job I can do on yours. It shall be like new. Oh, but I'm thirsty, parched with thirst! When are they coming for me, good sister?"

How long they have been away. We keep his bed warm and peer again and again through the windows, across the pond where our heedless ducks preen themselves and cackle, to the closed door of the

operating room. We grow strained and restless waiting for it to open. Ah, here at last come the stretcher bearers, the red blankets over the stretcher. We see them



front view only as they move toward us through the blue twilight. Our door swings open.

"Where is the shoulder that comes next, madame?"

"In bed 9. But Panquelin? Have they not finished with him yet?"

"Does one operate on a corpse when so many wait? And could we have stood

much more of this—his wife, his five children, his two rooms, his kitchen, his cellar, his little vegetable garden and 'Ah me, ah me, write gently to my wife!'—listening to that story for two hours with his round eyes looking at one while they cut off his legs, first one and then the other? Oh, they gave him a hypodermic and hung up a sheet to screen his legs. He could not see what they were doing and he felt no pain. Monsieur le major was *épatant*, but I tell you it was uncanny. One may well be seasoned. This is more than surgery; it is horror."

Small Parts

December 24.

We are hurrying on the preparations for Christmas which have occupied every breathing-space of the week. The days are so full that yesterday is divided from me by a gulf. This morning there were two newcomers, big stretcher bearers, both musicians, and both with badly wounded arms.

At lunch time the Directress says she has been present at a terrible operation, "a joyeux Louis, with his buttocks blown off and horrible vital injuries." A picture of the gay cricket of the salle d'attente, who in his boyish bravado had made so light of his case, swims before my eyes.

"Will he live?"

"He may, but in his condition I hardly dare to hope he will."

5 P.M.

A nice poilu who has fallen from his horse and broken his leg is brought in to us, and another with a shattered shoulder and a wound in the thigh. I first notice this man's delicate hands and feet. Then he speaks to me. He is a corporal, an engineer, graciously courteous, blue blood surging up here out of the true democracy of the French army.

I am hardly back in my shack when—one, two, three—the shrill whistles electrify me again. Only one *entrant*. This time a bullet through the flesh above the knee.

It looks a little inflamed, but nothing can be done to-night. He is a Breton farm hand, Le Couëdic, thirty-four or so, a territorial, with an innocent rosy face and blue eyes. He seems dazed to find himself not only a soldier but wounded and so far from home. The salle d'attente is the most dramatic of all the scenes of action here, except perhaps the operating room. The men passing through the hands of the nurse in charge there, form with her, in that first hour of strangeness and helplessness, warm ties of sympathy which last through all their stay. Some are speechless and come in only to die. We often know nothing of them, or no more than a chance delirious word reveals. Their smothered romances die with them—thirty years or more with one wipe of the sponge. But life has many dimensions, and length is perhaps the least indispensable of them all.

As Le Couëdic is carried off to bed, another boy of Louis's battalion arrives. He looks at us suspiciously, insists on undressing himself, will not let us touch him. On

the bed he stiffens himself and when I propose washing his back he says stubbornly that I may cut that out. The orderly laughs:

"He is afraid the die will run!" referring obliquely to his fantastically tattooed skin.

At bay, he turns reluctantly on his side and uncovers a hard lump tightly tied up in a check handkerchief—his money, hidden, he had hoped, from our possible light-fingeredness!

11:30 P. M.

Midnight mass. An empty ward has been turned into a chapel over Christmas. The Médecin-chef does not smile on the clergy, but his permission for this mass has been asked and given. Baron officiates with simple dignity. Tessac with his beautiful voice leads the singing. Doctors, nurses, orderlies, and some of the General's staff attend. The candle light from the improvised altar wavers dimly on their uniforms and on their faces.

CHRISTMAS

The glib Christmas salutation has a curious twist as it slips from our lips and awkwardly turns and corrects itself into a hope for next year. Each ward has its tree planted in a wooden tub. The convalescents and orderlies are keen on their decoration. Those of the blessés who are not too ill, while they banter one another over the contents of their "stockings," criticize the decorating of the tree. Rivalry runs high, and those who are up go from one ward to another for a peep—all things are allowed them to-day—and bring back news of the trees. Which one is likely to have the final vote?

The Penguin and I have taken great pains to divide the ornaments evenly, but there is latitude in their arrangement for a display of local talent. We have several wounded Arabs—one noseless, though light-hearted as ever; and a devoted pair—a sergeant and

"Mouton" as they call his friend and shadow. The sergeant is in bed, but Mouton is up and about. He lends a willing hand to the nurse and orderlies of his ward and even assists the barber in his varied activ-

ASSISTING THE BARBER

ities. In his little round cap and red flannel dressing gown he is ravished to be allowed to help with the arrangement of tinsel and coloured balls and to report to his ward on the progress of rival trees. It would be interesting to catch the angle from which they see our festival of peace and goodwill, that only this pitiless strife and our urgent need to pile up a strong and ever

stronger protecting wall of flesh between us and our enemies have drawn them into sharing with us. They are childlike, smiling, polite, even grateful for the privilege of dying for us. Do we not too lightly heap responsibilities on our own shoulders? What can our racy, feverish civilization of iron and steel, which so glitters in their eyes, give them in exchange for the silences and spaces, for the hand-to-hand grapple with Nature and one another, of their own free deserts?

The guns are pounding away, but our salle d'attente is happily empty all day. Mutilated youth—the shattered fragments of that pounding—does not come our way.

At sundown the trees are lighted and make a brave show, with their strings of coloured paper lanterns festooned along the crossbeams of the shacks and with flags and red paper flowers made by the men who, for the last ten days, have been busy over them, enjoying the fun like a lot of happy children. The Golden Godmother

goes the round of the wards distributing the presents which, tied with bright ribbons, have been piled into baskets. Many coloured lights spread a warm glow over the whole enclosure, zigzagging across the pond in the wake of the ducks that are turned into red and green enamel set in translucent darkness. Pain for a moment is dazzled and slinks into the shadow.

The General and some of his staff come up to see the fête. He is uneasy. We glow the most conspicuous spot in the whole plain.

"The next thing will be a bomb dropped in our field."

He files an order that henceforth all shutters must be closed, and no shack show a light after dusk.

We all have a real Christmas dinner, ending up with plum pudding and even champagne. Tessac sings carols, gay *argot* songs of the life of Paris, and ballads of the men's own countryside, while they swell the refrains. Consciousness brims over, pouring out to meet the hum of plucky voices

raised in the trenches, ships, and hospitals of all our Christmas world.

December 26.

Louis of the criminal regiment is dying. The hospital, to me, calls him "your boy." His desperate gaiety cuts to the quick. The General has decorated him for that daring dash of his; could his slighted, improvident life more surely get even with its handicap? Yet I have wondered—do I grow cynical of decorations? The price, these young lives, and the dear, boyish recklessness of their inexperience, are distorting my values. But how else, in such an upheaval, can our short-reaching hands chalk up the record? He has suffered agony and begins to lose hold on his blithe good humour. Something of himself has already gone on, and he is growing irritable under the terrible strain. Gangrene draws a denser and denser screen around him, slowly severing him from life.

Christmas is over. The Directress and her maid have gone. My heart fails me as I reflect that I am left in charge.

"Nothing but little things can happen, so do not worry. The old Médecin-chef and I have come mutually to understand and respect each other. Show him every consideration. Always ask his advice; he likes to be consulted. In case of complications arising from the French side, turn for direction to Moral Influence and La Basine; on the Anglo-Saxon side, to the Night Hawk. But nothing can happen. Keep them all happy."

My sailing orders were precise enough. I let myself be lulled by the words and the peace of an after-Christmas fatigue falls on the Boîte.

One of the nurses lends me some books, but it is difficult to find time here for reading or for letter-writing. We have plenty of spare moments, but so scattered that it takes a good deal of character to keep hold of any thread. Familiarity perhaps will help to lengthen the days. I am surprised to find how soon one grows accustomed to the sound of guns and to the continual arrival of the wounded. It is funny to see

the new nurses, their eyes grow big the first time they feel their shacks vibrate. But before one knows it, the days have begun to seem almost monotonously natural. We should hardly have thought them so in the old civilian life, now separated from us by the abyss which has swallowed at a gulp the interests and occupations of a lifetime.

This is a healthy life. Continual exercise, running in and out of the shacks in all weathers at all hours, their airiness, the simple food, sound war bread, good milk and eggs, all contribute to make it so. Every one is kind and helpful. French courtesy smooths away all difficulties for the novice.

December 27. 8 P. M.

"EUGÈNE SUREAU, 79th Territorials."

That is all, written on a card over your bed and indelibly written also in my memory. Why do I so remember you, Eugène Sureau?

You came in the night when I was not even on duty. It did not fall to me to cut off the torn, blood-soaked clothes, to give you the first cheer, the first warmth, after the wet, cold, unthinkable trenches and the torturing journey over rough roads in a poorly hung ambulance where, in the dark, you must have lain silently shrinking under each fresh jolt.

It has snowed all night and all to-day—a fine, hard snow that sparkles on the little wooden ways spanning the mud between our shacks. It sparkles, too, on the high-sitting old windmill which, through so many sunsets, has turned, like Verhaeren's mill, on a sky *couleur de lie*. Even the colour of the lees of wine is not in the sky this evening when you find your place in my memory, Eugène Sureau. I did not see your wounds. Sometimes that gaping, indecent horror photographs itself on the mind. They told me you had come in torn by shrapnel; but that was true of so many others.

Once or twice during the day, as I passed your bed, I smiled you a "*Comment allez-vous, mon ami?*" and heard your patient "*Ça ne va pas très bien, ma sœur.*" When at white nightfall I turned into Salle IV, you were not in my mind, Eugène Sureau. I had forgotten the big stretcher bearer who lay so uncomplainingly in bed 6. The ward was darkened, and the day orderlies had gone off duty. Only the orderly whose watch held him there until midnight was noiselessly

moving from bed to bed, preparing the men for their night of pain. But round bed 6 the screens were drawn, and, hearing me open the door, a nurse beckoned to me from a space between them.

"He has just died. I am alone. Will you help me to lay him out?"

There you were, the play of that patient smile still across your lips. The doctors had done what they could for you, but your wounds were too many and a terrible hæmorrhage had left you too weak to bear more. Both your legs were bandaged from hip to heel.

"Take the forceps out of that wound and put on layers of wool and more bandages," the nurse whispered.

And as I obey and add to the deforming bandages wool and yet more wool, you seem so little dead, so warm, that with a shamefaced sense of intrusion I expect to see your eyes turn on me, or a look of pain tighten your lips. No muscle moves. We can do as we will with you. We cannot hurt you. You are warm, yet far away; you are warm,

yet life—which your athlete's body and strong sweet face had perhaps made dear to you—has gone as capriciously, as mysteriously, as it came. Are you satisfied not to be, I vaguely wonder. Or is that quiet smile merely the tribute of the parting guest to his host—a well-bred acknowledgment of favours received, of discomforts too short-lived to be remembered?

We have wrapped you in your shroud, fastened the corner with its purple satin cross over your head. The nurse has stolen away through the hushed and now sleeping ward to call the stretcher bearers. I stand beside you, becoming compassionately more and more aware of the well-drawn lines of your body. Then suddenly I glance up and see the card over your bed: "Eugène Sureau, 79th Territorials." What are you to me but a name, a fine line, a thrill at one more turn of the screw among so many others heroically borne?

Yet from that moment you live for me. On some sunny countryside in France are your mother, your wife, your "*gosses*"—

playing at soldiers, perhaps, and talking of your home-coming. All unconscious are they that you lie here shrapnel-torn in this darkened sleeping ward, still warm but dead, while I, stooping down, give you, in their place, the kiss of peace which in the East the living give the dead.

You have been dead since the beginning of the world, yet you are still warm, Eugène Sureau. Why does your name so echo in my memory? What were you, Eugène Sureau?

THE DAILY ROUND

December 28.

THERE is a movement of troops in the village this morning. Beyond our hedge and behind the high windmill dark patches of little men, like ninepins, are hurrying to and fro. Ruled lines of them gyrate and are exorcised into rectangular shapes. The word comes up that General Joffre is there decorating a battalion of joyeux from the front and another on its way to take their places. It would have been interesting to see the old lion, generalissimo of us all, but we did not know of it in time to get the necessary permits. So we strain our eyes to catch what we can of the ceremony from our own trottoirs.

Moral Influence, La Basine, the Chic Type, the old Médecin-chef, and the doctor in charge of the radiographic cabinet are

fast friends and almost form a little clique to themselves. Any two of them may often be seen walking up and down the narrow plank-walks, taking their exercise together.

Moral Influence has a show ward. The walls are gay with coloured prints. The linen room sets aside all the red bed-covers and red night shirts for her. She is open-handed and takes a pride in having the best of everything from spirit lamps to attitude of mind. She is not a trained nurse, but long practice in settlement work and experience at the front since the beginning of the war have made her ready and capable. She appreciates and makes the most of the men's good qualities, and those in her ward who are well enough, put on—to please her—shining, happy faces.

Tracheotomy has been performed this morning on one of her men. We all take turns at sitting by him and keeping warm compresses on his throat. He is restless, at moments violent, and can with difficulty be kept in bed. Then he seems to struggle through to consciousness and

becomes docile and apologetic. At such times Moral Influence pats his hand, "*Cher homme, c'est un brave,*" and turning her eyes away, "How admirable these men are!" while through his agitated gasping for breath he smiles up into her pleasant face.

December 29.

The report of yesterday is contradicted to-day. It was not General Joffre in the village, but "a British general decorating British troops." We are so isolated that the nearest fringe of the outer world barely grazes our hedge.

3 P. M.

We should all like to know how Etienne, who is the only son of well-to-do people in the Midi, fell into the Foreign Legion. He volunteers no light on his career, unless his name for his nurse—"Elsa"—repeated all through his delirium, may be taken as light. His father and sister have been to see him, and when I went into the ward this morning he offered me some anemones fresh from his

home. No one would recognize my Tityus, the wild, suffering boy who came in such a short while ago. He puts his pannikin with a label on it by his bed to remind me, in case he should be asleep when I pass, to fill it with a special offering of cream or stewed fruit. The doctors say he cannot recover, but he seems slowly to be making his way toward what looks like health.

December 30.

The day has been eaten up chiefly by domestic considerations. Our household is simple enough. Our butler—nothing less—is in private life a house-painter, one of twins and of five mobilized brothers. He is young and shy with a high colour and an amusing, self-conscious, sideways walk. A little blue fatigue cap is stuck jauntily on one side of his head. His particular job is to keep the dining room and "salon" fires going, the floors swept, the plates heated, and to balance himself along the narrow plank-walks from the dining room to the kitchen and back with our rations. Also, with all the

orderlies, to take his turn as night watch, which means sitting up for half a night one night in every three. At first he was seconded by a village priest, now promoted to the rank of orderly in one of the wards—a position he long coveted. The priest has been replaced by Charles Rablet, a farm hand at home.

Now for Rablet I have an especial weakness. He is small, smiling, with a native humour, a frank, simple roughness, and a face that makes one think of apples and hay. His home is far away in the Vosges. When asked if he has any children, he answers in broad dialect, "Madame Charles has five of them." Letters tell him that Madame Charles has the grippe. Rablet cannot get permission to go home; he wails: "They are going to cup Madame Charles and I shall not be there."

Then there is also Madame Bosecke, charwoman and plate-washer, who—like Madame Madeleine, our right hand—is a Belgian refugee. The plate washing and lamp cleaning are done in a little lean-to

jocularly known as "The Castle of the Frozen Feet." Madame Bosecke is by no means destitute. She has a husband, four children, a horse and cart, and much else of her old home, which the others say she saved before taking refuge in our little village. Her morning fire lighting has at least the virtue of smoking us out. Her slovenly activities irritate Rablet who baits her continually. He then looks round at any chance audience he may have, and smilingly remarks: "Women need to be broken in." In another walk of life one might suspect him of having read Nietzsche. Every afternoon when the coal carts arrive, the most knowing of the orderlies make a dash to get the biggest pieces for their own wards. At first Rablet was not up to this game. But after he found it out his sturdy figure might be seen any afternoon, toward three o'clock, lying in wait behind one of the shacks, a pail in each hand; and no fires in the Boîte burned more clearly and brightly than ours.

A solemn ceremony of our day is the

morning potato peeling. The potatoes are spread out on a space between two shacks; twenty or more orderlies stand round in a ring, peeling, peeling, joking, grumbling *sotto voce*, and peeling—it is amazing how many we make away with. At first I thought it must be a religious function of some sort that kept them so still with bowed heads.

As the maid is on leave, I try to concoct a pudding for the nurses' dinner, for our rations include pudding once a week only. It is badly burned. Milk puddings made on a narrow salon grate, too narrow for more than half the saucepan to sit on the fire at a time, burn too easily. I think of the ambitious Jap who took a place as cook, then sat up at night rehearsing and kept what he called a "cemetery" for failures. I find a spirit lamp and have better luck.

In one of the shacks I come across some books and open Baudelaire's "Romantic Art." In this isolation it seems to me finer than ever. My eye falls on a phrase which rings in my head: "*Il était passionnément*

épris de la passion." How soon the priceless thin edge of deep emotion blunts. Nowhere, as here, is one conscious of how facilely one's values shift.

I saw Louis yesterday for the last time. He died in the night. A boy with meningitis is dying, too; the strange characteristic cry sounds through his ward and reaches me, even here in my shack.

December 31.

One newcomer only, to-day; he also is of the *Bataillon d'Afrique* and has a broken arm. "What a piece of work for you, madame, to wash me; but how good it feels!" He gives me one of two rings he made in the trenches from the aluminium of his pannikin. "The other is for my mother. If you offer to pay me I shall be hurt." I thank him and am delighted with my war trophy so graciously given—a genuine trench ring soon perhaps to take on some of the virtue of a curio.

The General calls and tells me that twelve hundred British have been gassed—

a new gas which does not have an immediate effect but causes forty-eight hours' agony. All the youth of my own family is not ten miles away, though letters between us are six days on the road. We have one gassed French soldier. He will recover, but it is not pretty to see—nor reassuring.

January 1, 1916.

How gladly would we follow the custom of certain ancient peoples of Asia Minor and present this New Year with the dead head of the Old. The gorgon face of 1915, its eyes closed forever, would surely propitiate the most implacable deity.

Ropes of evergreens and a plum pudding which came too late for our Christmas festivities are to celebrate the day. Baron hints that in the matter of the mass this morning we barely avoided a Franco-American pitfall. He is somewhat enigmatic, but he assures me that he took the only way mysteriously to save everybody's face. The result was *une toute petite messe basse.* So Tessac only sings a little—but

very well. I rack my brains for a clue. Our Médecin-chef, we all know, is sharply anti-clerical. In response to a wish from

the French nurses—possibly with the mobilized priests behind them—I had asked his permission for this New Year's celebration. Did M. Lussan think the screw was being turned on him by the priests, through me, whom he could not well refuse so small a favour without discourtesy? The whole strain between Church and State, in minia-

ture, loomed maybe behind our little mass. And Baron—did he know his actor best and with fine French flair score a victory, yet turn away wrath by so discreet a use of his privilege? How deep is the art of navigation!

We distribute coloured bags of sweets, knapsack needle-cases, and photo frames in the wards. The baker of the village sends us up big trays of cakes, as a New Year's offering to the men; the tobacconist sends cigarettes and packets of pipe tobacco all round. The unquenchable, witty lightheartedness of the French soldier rises to the occasion. No excuse for a fête can be disregarded; so again we make merry.

An aviator friend of Mademoiselle Basine takes a snap at us as he flies over the hospital. It is curiously decorative and suggests the artistic "arrangements" of a flying world in the New Years ahead.

THE QUILL DRIVER

January 8.

A GREAT character of Salle II was "*Le Petit Père.*" We called him so, partly out of affection, partly because he was small and over forty and wore, drawn tightly over his head, a comic, crocheted, pink, pointed night-cap, with a tassel on the top; but chiefly, I think, because he had a young daughter of fourteen round whom his thoughts, when they did not dwell on his next meal, continually played.

Seeing this rather pitiful little man in the last bed on his side of the ward, I went up to him and asked him if there was anything I could do for him.

"Why, yes, madame," he answered in a voice that had in it an ancient note of complaint but was relatively to the mo-

ment cheerful to the point of heroism, "if you would get me a little comb I should be very grateful."

"A little comb? Why, what would you do with it, *mon vieux?*"

He was lying there waiting to have a leg amputated and the request struck me as irrelevant.

"Why, I would comb my moustache with it. Do you not see how much it needs it?"

Between amusement and pity I was more than anxious to get him his comb. After a vain search through our hospital supplies, as luck would have it, when I was telling my story to amuse one of the tired nurses, she said: "There is a little comb in a leather case among some presents sent out for the Christmas trees. You will find it on the shelf in my room."

Away I flew for the comb and back to Le Petit Père who greeted me with a radiant smile.

"Anything more you would like?"

"I am ashamed to ask, but if I had a small notebook, it would make me very happy."

The small notebook also was found and carried to him, and from that moment until he left the hospital we were, of course, boon companions. When he came round from the anæsthetic I must promise to be there, promise to hold his hand through the first most painful dressings when, since I must tell the whole truth, my protégé would yell quite piteously, while others round him in the operating room—some with greater ordeals than his to be gone through, ordeals generally borne without a groan—would not unkindly chaff him:

"Yell, yell, little father! It will do you good."

And he: "Oh, but those blessed drains! Who will dare to say that they cause one no agony?" And, looking apologetically up at me, he would add: "Hold my hand tight and I will scream no more. But Oh, là, là, it does hurt."

No one of all the silent spectators thought an iota the less of Petit Père for his screaming. Every one could not be the same kind of hero. Had he not faced the music and

lost a leg? And what of his Military Cross? Besides, his pink night-cap was in itself a passport to indulgence as was also his love for his little daughter.

"Do not tell her they have taken off my leg. It will make her so unhappy. Tell her rather that her little father has an insignificant wound and will soon be with her on a long leave."

Each day he showed me the notebook with its written side growing thicker and thicker. Such fine, neat handwriting. And from it he would invite me to read, while he, true to his rôle of author, would lick his lips over the happier phrases, accepting, as no more than his due, all words of praise. The diary, for so it really was, began with the minutest details of how he was wounded, how long he had lain on the field, how the stretcher bearers had found him and carried him away; of the drive in the ambulance; his reception in our waiting room, the hot scrub he had had there, with every particular of his first dressings, the character of each of his doctors and nurses, and his many

small adventures right up to the gift of the comb, leaving it on record that he had only to ask to receive, in true biblical fashion.

The story is nearly a counterpart of so many. The only amusing part of it is that, after several weeks, we discovered that he could not write a word himself, could not even sign his name, and that it was his comrade in the next bed who patiently put it all down for him. Of course, he was given the Médaille Militaire and his old Cross renewed the emotions of its youth under a *palme*. His past record and his lost leg were letters patent to that. But when we congratulated him, his face took on a woe-begone expression and his pals, after much suppressed giggling, confessed that he was afraid that he would die now, since a belief held that only the dying were ever decorated by the General. After that they would tease him and tell him how pale he looked; and the more jocose among them, better versed in the written word, would say his temperature was up to the dying point: he had better make haste and see a priest.

He weathered the storm all the same, and finally the day came when we were obliged to send him on to a base hospital.

"Good-bye, sister. You have been very good to me. I will often write to you."

I smiled, knowing the secret and wondering how it would be when he no longer had his neighbour to cover the pages for him with that careful, neat handwriting. I need not have worried at all. Could not Petit Père with his moustache carefully combed and his flair for a good tale, find as many kind comrades as he could wish for? Presently his letters began to flow in—long sheets packed with closely written words. They reminded me of sixteenth-century Pontormo and his diary. Let Le Petit Père speak in his own words, which cover the ground so felicitously, so unaffectedly, in their passion for revealing detail and their keen sense of life.

"I hasten to write this letter to give you my news and receive yours by the same token. I got through the journey very well. I arrived at Dunkirk at eleven o'clock. At

midday, bread-soup, meat, vegetables, and wine. At two o'clock, tea. At three o'clock, coffee, bread, and milk. At four o'clock, coupling-up of the Red Cross train. Finally, at five o'clock, the train took its departure and you may imagine how happy I was to be off in my compartment. I find myself, luckily, in the company of the joyeux from Salle III. The countryside is exquisite to see. Unfortunately the night comes too soon, and I can make out nothing more. At seven o'clock we find ourselves in the station at Calais, and for supper we are given meat, cheese, bread, wine, with coffee to finish up. We go on again at five o'clock the next morning, and are given bread-soup, black coffee, rolls, and butter.

"The day begins to dawn and we perceive pretty green plains. It is a beautiful sight. It refreshes me after the muddy swamps of Belgium. At the station of Rouen the morning meal is passed round: broth, ham, boiled eggs, jam, cigarettes, and oranges. We leave that station at midday. We cross the Seine from which a thick mist rises."

And so through many pages of notes on the long journey.

A later letter, less well written (Was he by that time separated from the joyeux of Salle III?) runs: "I have arrived at Le Havre. I have not suffered and have been well fed. At the hospital where I now am I must undergo another operation. May it be the last! I am on a low diet, but what they give me is good. I am very much troubled, but not on account of my leg. I have received bad news from home. My poor old mother is dead. You may imagine, madame, how great a pain this is to me. I think the news of the loss of my leg added to her great age must have caused her death. . . . I continue to write every day in my notebook. I think, dear madame, this is all I have to tell you to-day. Send me, of your kindness, a packet of Bastos; I cannot get them here. I will send you the money for them."

Poor little father! Sincerest and most unpretentious of quill drivers by proxy.

HOW THEY LEAVE US

January 12.

TWICE a week the blessés are sent on to the base hospitals. I have to be up in the dim morning to see that everything is ready in the salle d'attente. "Evacuation Days" are busy ones for me. Sometimes we send off as many as thirty-six in a batch, sometimes only two or three, but an effort is made to keep the hospital empty, for we never know when a rush may come.

When there are many evacués one of our chief difficulties is to get enough water for the hot bottles. The head of the wash-house looks glum at any pilfering in his cauldrons, and the stretcher bearers, who keep the water going for the

operating room, jealously guard theirs. We have recently, outside the salle d'attente, acquired a cauldron of our own, but in the intervals of our need the orderlies let the fire go out. The Penguin, who says that since he never sleeps he will be *garde perpétuel* of the waiting room, appears to have much-needed moments of oblivion, for too often, early on cold winter mornings, there is the same old harassed scramble for hot water.

We are going to make a new arrangement. The night nurses will undertake to jog the memory of the "perpetual guard" of the waiting room on their four-o'clock and five-o'clock morning rounds. But this hot-water question is still of burning importance. The wounded, taken out of bed and dressed, are brought to the salle d'attente on stretchers. Each man must be warmly wrapped up in blankets with one or more hot-water bottles, for he has a long and cold journey before him. Safely tucked up, he signs a receipt, and his valuables are returned to him. The Directress gives choco-

late and cigarettes all round to beguile the way. The men, looking like mummies, are then hoisted into the ambulances to cries of: "*Hé là ! Gare à la tête, au pied, au bras*"— and away they go.

They all long to be sent to Paris, and anxiously ask:

"Where am I going?" To which the stale joking answer is:

"Origin and destination unknown."

"Good-bye, and thank you, sister."

"Good-bye, friend, and good luck to you!"

One gets so attached to them, it is often hard to see them disappear into the silence out of which they came.

My friend, the joyeux who gave me the ring, has had his arm set and was sent off to-day.

THE FOLK SONG

January 15.

I WENT this evening to say good-night to the men in Salle II and give them an evening cigarette—a "Bastos," which they prefer to all others good or bad. Even the lure of a "Woodbine" pales beside this brand of their desire. I find le père Corneiller on his evening round, and he asks me to help him with the dressings. Le Couëdic has had a bad time with his knee. It seemed nothing at first but, after two operations, the articulation of the knee had to be opened. With a forceps I hold the desolate flap while the pus is cleaned away and disinfectants poured on the wound. He is better to-night. François—"poor little number 1," as we call him—is better, too. For many days we have had to be very quiet on his account. After the doctor goes I say:

"Would you like Tessac to sing to you to-morrow?"

"Yes, but we have a tenor of our own, Le Couëdic, there in the fourth bed. Ask him, madame. He would like to sing to you."

Without overmuch persuasion their tenor agrees. He is propped up against his bed-rest, looks round his audience with his out-of-doors blue eyes, wavers a trifle in striking his note, and begins a Breton popular song in a sweet, rather plaintive voice.

It is dusk, and there is no other sound while he sings and sings and sings. I look on in amazement. Is this the bashful farm hand, so absorbed, so enjoying his own art?

It is bedtime for them, and their nurse has been all too indulgent. After the

twentieth verse I say: "That is very nice, but you must not get too tired, *cher ami !*" He lets himself be tucked up for the night and then, as I turn to go:

"If you really like that, madame, I will finish it to-morrow."

In a few minutes he is asleep.

January 19.

This morning two young joyeux are brought in. One of them is so clever with his hands. His pockets are full of long, intricate chains, bags, purses, and medallion frames made—in the boring lulls of the trenches—out of horsehair strung with steel beads.

His friend, to whom he seems devoted, is in a desperate condition. He is a southern-looking boy with a high colour under a smooth brown skin, and the large, almond-shaped dark eyes of an adolescent in a Persian miniature. It is a bad case of gas gangrene, and the doctors pass the fatal verdict: "*Faut te couper la jambe.*" He refuses at first, then consents; it is his only

thread of chance. De Précy amputates the leg at the hip joint, a staggering operation. The beauty of the mutilated body lying on the table and the severed leg carried away to be dissected is almost intolerable.

Later.

He is still alive but very restless. I meet Père Corneiller coming from the ward and ask for news. He shakes his head:

"We were too late."

THE "LIGHT BREEZE"

January 20.

When I arrived he was already one of the pets of the hospital and the pride of the doctors—not because of any show of health he made, poor lamb, but because he was still alive after all they had been allowed to do to him, and out of gratitude to him for all they thought they had learned to do against another time.

As a little boy he had been an acrobat, and his delicate grown-up boniness still gave one some idea of what that reedy childhood must have been. Then, weary of that hard life, or kicked out of the company for some slip, he became a waiter in a café. Never very communicative, he was as silent

on that score as on others. We can only infer that something learned there or before led him to commit *le crime*—ever so little a one perhaps, such as many we know may have committed. Only, you see, he was so thin in body and environment, there was nothing with which to cover it up; while others less exposed, well padded with fortune and with place, sail virtuously on their ways all unsuspected. This crime then—he, as I have said, having nothing with which to hide it—lay not only naturally bare, but was dragged into a glittering artificial light by those whose interest it may have been to blacken and defame him and so gain another soldier for the not-too-popular African Light Infantry.

He was condemned, of course, and "poured" (as they so forcibly say) into the *Bataillon d'Afrique* to be a *zéphyr* or *joyeux* then and until his death. Brave boys, many of these joyeux are. Their crimes forgotten when the war bugles blow, they are sent to the hottest corners; for, having nothing to lose but a trifling something of

physical enjoyment and, perhaps, of physical comfort, they fight with a daring and a foolhardiness born of their adventurous, irresponsible lives. Their zealous lightheartedness wins for them their name; and, if good fighters, they are no less heroes under suffering as many of us happen to know.

There is always, of course, a chance of rehabilitation dangled before the eyes of any one of them who, more desperate than the rest, shall win a military laurel by some signal deed of daring. Once the cross or medal is pinned on his breast he can, if still whole, be "poured" into a regiment of better social repute, whitewash his blackened name, and salve the old family sore that his backsliding may have caused. But, as one boy explained to me, the grapes so gathered too often turn sour in the eating. It is sufficient for a theft or some unfathered act of insubordination to be committed in his new surroundings: presto, it is the erstwhile joyeux who is guilty.

Why go any further? We have all heard of the dog and his name. The

joyeux, even with his Cross of Honour, bought at a so much higher price than other people's crosses, generally prefers to remain in his own battalion, where there is honour even among thieves.

Our Le Groux then, "Light Breeze" or "Joyous One"—a bullet through the spleen and kidney, half-flayed, with stomach, liver, and part of his intestines laid impudically bare, drains in the abdominal cavity and in his back—was one of the pets of the hospital and of the medical staff. If the doctors cherished him and cherished themselves in him, he no less cherished the doctors—one especially, M. Chévert, whose fine figure was physically all that Le Groux's was not. To real skill he added "the happy hand," so dear to these suffering men, and was in return adored by them.

"*Monsieur le major est un chic type*," Le Groux would say; and a happy look of confidence would flit across the emaciated face, lighting into significance the bright brown eyes, high, hectic cheek bones, and somewhat oblique, thin nose.

Every one spoke of Le Groux and asked, after each dressing, how he was; glanced many times a day at the chart over his bed and speculated what he would be fit for when—rehabilitated by a decoration (of which even a whisper would send his temperature speeding up to danger-point) and his wounds finally drained and cleaned —he should be handed on by us to a base hospital thence to mingle once more in his country's civil life. The gray hospital ambulance, with its prominent red cross, never whirled one of us into the nearest town, there to buy provisions and other household necessities, without bringing back some dainty for Le Groux—oysters, fish, *petits gâteaux*, or fruit—in the hope of tempting his capricious appetite and winning for ourselves his thanks.

Yes, certainly he was one of the pets of the hospital. And not only did he adore his doctor, but he also adored his faithful friend the nurse—his nurse, the Night Hawk—to whom alone, by virtue of her skill and devotion, was entrusted the ceremony

of his terrible dressings, and whose care came nearer to a true mother's than anything this boy had ever known. And yet his mother lived. How we found it out I do not know. That was one of the things that always set us thinking. At rare intervals he would mention a sister, but never had any one of us heard him speak of his mother. Did he know her ashamed and broken-hearted by that slip, that blot, that crime, by reason of which he was "poured" into the Bataillon d'Afrique? We shall never know.

Here, then, you have his life with us, the slow-dragging days coloured only by his changing moods, mixture alike of fineness and coarseness, at moments pulling one up short with a sense of one's own inferiority, then again flashing too crude a light on that past of which we guessed so much and knew so little.

Yesterday he had been here four months when—by one of those brusque changes, common I am told in all military hospitals (due, some say, to intrigue, others to a

legitimate desire on the part of a paternal General Staff to give to all medical aspirants an equal chance of experience and practice at the front)—the General signed the papers and our medical staff was changed, the Chic Type among the number. "Promotion" the authorities called it, though he thought otherwise; and there was much heartburning and putting of heads together in our camp.

When Le Groux heard that his doctor was to go to another hospital he said brightly:

"*Eh bien*, you will wrap me up well and take me with you."

"Alas, no, *mon vieux*, you must wait until that bronchitis is better; then I myself will come and fetch you. *Au revoir et sois sage*. You will, I hope, soon be well. The new doctor will be good to you."

Le Groux lay still all that day and all the next. In the evening of the second day I stood looking down at his wan, pinched face, with the skin tightening round nose and lips. He slowly opened his eyes.

"Is there nothing I can get for you? No?

Not even prunes?" They were his favourite sweet.

"Things stick in my throat these days," he whispered, "but if you will cook them, to please you I will try to eat them."

A moment later he stretched out his hands to his nurse who folded him in her arms, her hot tears falling on the white face.

Twenty minutes later the General followed by the chief surgeon of the auto-chir turned the handle of Salle I. The General held a Croix de Guerre and a Médaille Militaire in his hand.

"Where is Le Groux, *ma sœur?*"

"He is dead."

"Dead!"

"Yes, he lived only on his courage. When they removed his doctor he lost hope and died."

Without a word, his head bent, the General turned and left the ward, two little unopened boxes in his hand, his sheathed sword hanging impotently at his side.

SQUALLS

January 21.

SUNDAY. It is a high, bright cold day. I go to the Médecin-chef with the bill of lading and plans, which arrived last night, of the new heating apparatus for the operating room. He is sitting rather dejectedly in his overheated cabin sorting papers at a table. But affably:

"Take a seat, madame."

I explain my errand.

"Very well. I am going away to-day, but I will see that it is attended to."

The words are so lightly, smilingly spoken, that I take it as a temporary absence and attach no importance to the interview. He keeps the papers and I go serenely through the morning's routine.

At lunch time, when I reach the dining room, La Basine, Moral Influence, and

Night Hawk are talking, with grave faces.

"Is anything wrong?"

"Yes, everything is wrong. Even the médecin-chef is going and the staff of the auto-chir is to step into our doctors' shoes. They would like us to believe that it is the doing of the Administration," and Moral Influence's eyes blaze. "It is quite true that administrations do not usually leave a laparotomist where laparotomy has most urgently to be performed, and Chévert's record could hardly pass unnoticed," she continues scathingly. "But do not let them deceive you. The auto-chir is out for stripes, and, as every one knows, we have the best place on the front!"

Night Hawk and I look despairingly at each other. Is it impossible that the change should be a mere matter of administration on the part of the Service de Santé? The French women brush aside the suggestion. Only strangers could be hoodwinked. What then had better be done? Clever speech falls off clever, caustic tongues, and

there is much restless consulting of our pillows, but nothing can be done. The spirit of the hospital turns like a harassed squirrel in its cage and can run up no tree to clear its vision. The nurses redouble their devotion. Let the truth about the doctors be what it may, the men shall not suffer by the change if they can help it.

Organization

January 23.

Mademoiselle Basine has a mother. It is understood that every three months she visits her mother. The time draws near.

Mrs. Grenville leaves her happy home. She has been here before and will return for a few weeks to fill the gap during La Basine's absence. She is big and breezy.

"Efficiency, yes, that's the thing," she buoyantly sums it up. "If you will only wait a moment until I can have a morning at my desk, we shall become the most efficient hospital on the line. It's bully, you'll see. We do it at home and it works beautifully."

She is almost cubistic in her dire simplifications. When she is not harassed by the tortuous complexities of other people's minds—of latin minds in particular—she has the pleasantest ways and a witty good-fellowship which plays seductively over her relentless absolutism. She adores uniformity and in all that does not touch America, she is pacifist and neutral to the backbone, though not without a weakness for politics. A fully trained and excellent nurse, she yet has done with nursing. She is not here now to probe physical weakness but to cut deeper—for the purification of art and sentiment—down to the unquestionable depravity of the human heart.

Once accomplish this satisfactorily, and a riddle which has come to puzzle her will be as simple as everything else. Perhaps her matured method, so free from any human deviation, has almost reached beyond the ripeness of a nice equilibrium. A little more, and might we not have a curious clinical example of a disease of labour? But that little more—how kindly Nature

readjusts her balance. Just in time a tantalizing flutter of the eyelids of Art distracts her, piques her curiosity. Eyelids hitherto have been negligible. They comfortably close at night and open in the morning, so call for no attention. Her common sense suggests that a good square look into the huzzy's eyes can reveal no more than naked truth, and does not "Organization"—for so, through this brief phase of her career, let us call her—know, from past experience, that there is nothing so simple as truth and that it is always ugly. Exceptions are too rare to call for pigeon holes. "Come, old lady, raise your eyelids; it is absurd to flutter them when you have only age and ugliness to hide." Yet the ancient eyelids coyly resist her blandishments. "Well, no matter, the way is easy. I will seek truth and find art." Like a vacuum cleaner she makes one buzzing round, then settles down to choose from her bag—out of the dust kicked up by hospital feet—the essential ingredients for analysis not only of love, heroism, and de-

votion with their thousand many-coloured facets, but of all other secrets—even to those underlying the French nurses' dissatisfaction with the late change of doctors.

Logically given form what a hit the real truth will make. Great plans must not be confused by defiant feminine eyelids, however august. So Organization clears her decks for action, while she turns and turns the chewing gum of her inquiry.

A BLOW BELOW THE BELT

January 28.

We were driven into Dunkirk yesterday by M. Maline. At home he has all that wealth can give. Here he fills the humble rôle of chauffeur to the auto-chir. He delights in burning up the road. Our commissions done and an early moon beaming down upon us, we were skimming along the edge of the canal when we met a horse and shay with two occupants—an old man and his daughter—dawdling along. M. Maline ran the space between us too close, caught their axle with our mud-guard, and over they went into the ditch, breaking one of their shafts. It took us a few seconds to pull up and shake ourselves. A crumpled mud-guard was our only hurt. But what of the others? The old driver had picked himself up and was trying to quiet the plunging

horse, while his daughter lay back still dazed in the hood of the up-tilted shay. She soon clambered down, however, and running up to us, began to vociferate, pouring out a stream of noisy abuse in which the old man leading his horse joined querulously.

We were sorry for the mishap and very anxious to make good. At the height of her harangue, the lady's eye fell on an Englishman of our party. Had they not crossed the Channel together a couple of months ago? The sudden change in her manner at this discovery did honour to the memory of that encounter. She had since then had no chance of speaking English and, forgetting her wrongs, was just beginning to make up for lost time, when to our undoing the motor of M. Muret, our Médecin-inspecteur, came tearing along the road. Inspecteurs, I suppose, may never leave anything uninspected, least of all interestingly frayed edges of a newly broken shaft by the roadside. So before we knew it, he and his companion had joined our group—eight explanatory people with a shabby

horse and an overturned shay behind us as our setting. Above all our voices rose the authoritative voice of M. Muret.

"You admit, M. Maline, that it was your fault; you admit that you were speeding?" And the incriminating notebook, devoted to human stumblings—raw material for *enquêtes*—was whipped from his pocket. Then his clockwork running down, he got back into his car and was off—who dares say at top speed?

We tether the horse by the road and take the lady—now mollified and as graciously talkative in English as she had before been vituperative in Flemish—into the limousine. Her father climbs into the vacant seat outside and we drive them to their village for help. On the doorstep of her home the lady explains their mishap to her husband and points out the Englishman. The husband's face relaxes. Her old father sets forth the adventure to his old wife, who, in turn, gesticulating, tells the tale to all the villagers within earshot. We leave our names, promise to replace the shaft, and shake

hands all round with warmly expressed hopes of future and less dramatic meetings. We have formed imperishable ties. On our way home I say to M. Maline:

"Well, we got out of that scrape simply enough. How easy it is for decent people to settle their differences."

"Precisely so"—ironically—"but, madame, have you not forgotten the Administration? The nudge we gave that body below the belt will cost me ten days at least of military prison."

NIGHT DUTY

February 2.

NEITHER the Night Hawk nor I could ever understand the dislike of the nursing staff of being put on night duty. So when a merciful spin of the executive wheel singled us out for the honour, there were perhaps no two such happy people in the Boîte.

Night is nowhere more wonderful than here. The daylight supremacy of vociferating guns shrinks into a corner in the immensity of its ancient stillness. We are tired of the glare and tumult of the day; of conflicting personal interests; of international differences that have a way of oozing out of every heated pore. Simple, straightforward work lightens and liberates. Only the tournament of smiles and frowns, so independent of the work on which our hearts are set, strains and wearies one.

The Night Hawk loves poetry and quiet. She is Canadian and of the gold one bends in one's hand, out of which primitive peoples fashion their ornaments and their gods. She is all disinterestedness, all devotion and self-forgetfulness; a thoroughly trained nurse with a heart that never loses the freshness of its sympathy nor its willingness to be spent in the service of these men whose pluck is so amazing, whose rare lack of it, so pitiful. I have the happiest time in the world flitting through the night at her heels, resting for a moment to admire the ducks as they sleep upon the pond and reach, in the quality of their white under moonlight on gray-green water, the subtlety of premeditated beauty.

We carry our lanterns flickering over mud and snow and put them down at the door of each ward we visit, that the orderly on guard in the salle d'attente may, in event of newcomers, know where to find us. In each ward an orderly is on duty. He sits reading at the table just inside the door, and it is his business to report to the nurses in

any crisis. When the war broke out most of these men knew nothing of nursing. They are priests, barbers, farm hands, or small tradesmen, as the case may be, and have fitted themselves to fill their present billets drolly or effectively, according to their individual temperaments. Being of the same class as the soldiers, they have at least the advantage of thoroughly understanding most of their charges. Their watch begins at dusk and lasts till midnight, when each is relieved by another orderly, on guard till all eyes open to the sound of the morning horn and the regular day staff takes the work again into its own hands.

The night nurses make the little salon shack their headquarters. They build a bright coal fire, spread out on a table materials for writing, reading, and for supper, and take undisputed possession of the night. It is part of their duty to be on call for the arrival of the ambulances and to go the round of the hospital once every hour, unless particular circumstances make it necessary for one of them to spend the whole night at

some forlorn bedside or to renew a dressing which cannot be left so many hours unchanged.

At the midnight return "home," if there has been a moment for forethought, there will be not only a cheering glow, but a kitten and a kettle singing their welcome together and an hour of conscious rest such as no day can ever know.

And the night nurse often needs such simple cheer. While on her rounds she glides through darkened ward after darkened ward. Death—mysterious, spasmodic breathing-out of life which our instinct so curiously shrinks from—is here, is there, is everywhere. The beautifying touch of his obliterating finger disarms her fear. It is not so with pain, in whose wry, haunted environment is neither life nor death, but a grimly barriered and bounded No Man's Land where the bravest lose their bearings. No intimacy lessens her horror of his presence. He alone seems the great reality, and life no more than a drop of water, detained and magnified for a moment out of relativ-

ity, then slipping eagerly from under his distorting lens back into the churning current.

There are uneventful nights, too, when the men snore loudly, there is hardly a groan, and no newcomer. At such times we tiptoe in and out of the wards, putting a cigarette into a wakeful hand and telling its owner on how many rounds we have found him fast asleep. Hours drag in darkened wards. Fever and delirium do not quicken their pace, and the blessé, with the rest of the world and with greater reason, has an instinct for exaggerating the tale of his sleeplessness.

On such nights we are keenly alive to the dire import of the blaring guns on the one hand and, on the other, to the sleeping stillness of half a hemisphere where busy minds forget their arithmetic and predatory hands for a moment lie inert.

During the day the night nurses sleep in a tent, pitched for quiet in the middle of a field outside the hospital enclosure. It is a small green tent with two beds, a tiny table,

and two oil stoves to take off the chill. To reach it we climb through a hole in the hedge and balance ourselves on a slippery plank—laid precariously across the ditch, and which under our weight generally slips into the slime—then across a space thickly set with thistles. This field the night nurses once shared with

a cow, until the cow became too curiously enamoured of the tent and had to be evicted.

Some mornings the tent strains and pulls at its moorings and groans as the wind licks furiously around it, until we can almost imagine ourselves the centre of a whirlwind, instantly to be caught up in its spiral.

At quieter times as we lie courting sleep and lazily looking out across the beautiful grass, powdered and glistening with hoar frost, our eyes can rest on a cottage, thatch-roofed and nestling close behind the hedge, or play along the main road not fifty yards away, where silhouettes of soldiers pass continuously in single file trudging to and from the front.

At six P. M. Madame Madeleine wakes us, a cup of tea in her hand. The horn will sound for *la soupe* at seven, and duty begins again at eight.

The horn is blown by an old man who has in his hands the regular running of the Boîte. He begins at six-thirty every morning and points the day with his blasts. The rest of his job is to pick up all stray paper lying about within our circle. He sportingly awaits his moment and spears fluttering scraps on an

old two-pronged fork fastened to the end of a long stick.

February 3.

The auto-chir tightly closes its fist over the possession of its prospective stripes. Three months to face—the Chic Type's record will easily cover that, his friends ironically insist—and its reward is sure. Steadily making its way through the cross currents the work of the hospital goes on as usual. Entrants, évacués, nimble scalpels cutting their way through cries of pain—life, death, and rival factions rolling over in their tussle to be top dog.

A large school of surgeons or *stagiaires* is billeted on us. They are of all ages and all grades. The operating room has become a school for demonstration presided over by De Précy who at least brings an excellent surgical record in support of his new appointment.

THE BLUE FACE

In the Operating Room

Eleven p. m. The whistle sounds three times. Six newcomers.

"This leg is bleeding badly. Don't jolt him. Take him carefully to the operating room. Hurry."

"*Your* wound is in the head, I see. Doctor, to which ward shall he go?"

"Wash and warm him. Then let them take him to Salle III. It is Nourier's turn to-morrow. He will operate."

"And this one, ma sœur?"

"A bullet in the abdomen; hardly any pulse and he has been vomiting."

"When was he wounded? Twenty-four hours ago? It is a scandal! We must operate at once. You say that none of them have had anti-tetanus serum? What criminal neglect! An inquiry must be set afoot. Such things cannot be allowed to pass. Where is he from?"

"From Bosinghe."

"Our section. How can they expect us to save them if they keep them so long before sending them on? What with poisoned ammunition and exposure, the odds are all against them."

"This man, doctor, is wounded in the neck. His card says the bullet went through the neck and is probably lodged in the base of the skull or in the spine."

"When was your last dressing done, *mon ami?* I can hardly hear what you say—

two hours ago? Two? (Holding up two fingers.) You have come all the way with your head over the end of the stretcher like that? I see, you could not breathe with it otherwise? Get him warm, sister, and send him to the operating room. Then we will see."

How terrifyingly blue his face is! Such a nice face, too. He has hardly any pulse.

"Here, my friend, let me put this cushion under your head and raise it just a little. And the hot-water bottles will soon make you feel better. Thank you for that smile."

All bad cases to-night.

In the operating room the boy with a bullet in the abdomen lies on his stretcher on the floor, apparently dead. They do all they can to bring him round. He revives. They chloroform him, open the abdominal cavity. Floods of dark blood well out. We are too late.

"If they could only send us these abdominal cases at once. A fine, handsome young chap like that, too!"

"Yes, appalling! It's war. Now for that leg; it cannot wait."

February 4.

"There is to be a big operation this morning. Have you heard?"

"Which? The head?"

"No, that spinal case. It will be interesting. Who is to do it?"

"I do not know but I hope De Précy. These men are like children; they give themselves over to one so trustingly. The best is not good enough for them, poor devils."

The whole medical staff is in the theatre with the matron, two nurses, and myself—come together at the invitation of the Médecin-chef to see so rare a *tour de force* in surgery. The fair man brought in during the night lies on the table alone. He is naked, a blanket lightly thrown over him. Every one is busy—sterilizing instruments, getting swabs, towels, and dressings ready or talking in little hushed groups.

What is he thinking of, I wonder. I go up to him.

"You look a different person this morning, *mon vieux.* How do you feel?"

"Better, thank you. You are the nurse of the waiting room."

"So you remember me? I feel flattered. Where is your home? In Nantes you say? And you have four little children? Lucky man."

"Yes, they are not bad. All but the youngest go to school. And she's a harum-scarum. If I could only see them now."

"Every one will do what he can to make it possible. Courage! No need for me to say that to you, *mon brave.*"

"*Eh bien,* are we ready? What is his pulse?"

"Sixty-eight."

"So much to the good. He had none when he arrived. Is he off? Turn him on his face."

"The pulse is gone!"

"What? Quick! Put him on his back

again. Stimulate him. Caffeine. . . . Ah, he comes round. That was a nasty turn to play us. Is he all right now? Then lay him on his side. And you, Berry, never let go of his pulse even for a second. We must keep him in this position. Prop him up—yes, so. It makes it harder, but it cannot be helped. Where is that radiographic plate? Let me have another look at it. Not so successful, Gougon, as some you have made. No sign of the ball?"

"None that I can definitely make out."

"There is a slight thickness just here, I think. And from the symptoms it seems to me that the projectile might well be there. Are you not of my opinion, Samain?"

"Possibly, Médecin-chef. It looks almost like it."

"Very well then, messieurs, I will mark that spot on the neck with a blue pencil. I shall make an incision from the third to the sixth cervical vertebræ and I think that we shall find the ball. You are keeping a careful watch on the pulse, Berry? Good. And you, hold his neck as level as possible

to give him the best chance of breathing. Now we begin. Can you all see? You? And you, mesdames?"

All heads lean forward. The shorter and less well placed politely elbow the others and watch their chance to push forward, while others, finding it hopeless to see well enough to follow the operation with any profit, lean up against the wall, waiting. One or two look out of the window across the little pond with its well-spaced old willow trees and its fat, lazy ducks—across to the mud flats of Flanders, here and there dotted with windmills, faint and fainter reflections of our own which turns and turns always, marking indecipherable cycles of life and death upon the sky.

"Come here, madame. I want to show you the spinal cord compressed by broken bone, but apparently uninjured. See, I take out the splinters. Ah, here is the flattened piece of lead just as I hoped. *Voilà*, that is all I dare do. What do you say? 'A horrible operation; a gash deep like a trench cored with the marrow of life'?

You are right. To see the living spine is not an every-day occurrence. But I'm dog-tired now; up all night and two hours of this strain."

"Well, your work is done. You can rest. He wants so much to live, it would be something to have saved him. Is there a chance for him?"

"One may always hope. It is amazing what bodies will stand, especially young, healthy ones like this."

February 5.

He seems better this morning, moves his arms more easily, says he does not suffer. But his breathing is like a beginning of pneumonia.

Later.

On my way to ward VI, I meet one of the nurses:

"How the guns roar. They say they are bombarding La Panne and are about to make a desperate attempt to get Verdun."

"The General says if it falls it will be of

no consequence. The guns have long been removed. But we shall try hard to make the Germans pay the price. By the way, the man with the round beard and the wound in his thigh has just died."

"Who told you so? He seemed all right last night."

"They fetched Baron half an hour ago to give him extreme unction. He was only just in time. A secondary hæmorrhage. Every one was so busy they found it out too late."

"Look, is that he they are carrying to the mortuary chapel?"

"No, they are coming from Salle I. That is the spinal case every one was so much interested in yesterday."

"What! Not the nice blue-eyed man from Nantes who had four children. He dead, too?"

"Not a complaint to the last. I never saw anything so heartrending. His pillow was soaked with blood."

Fais-toi tout petit pour la vie, mais fais-toi grand pour la mort.

TRYING TO CUT KNOTS

February 6.

The Directress came back last night. Interviews are the order of the day—interviews separately, interviews collectively, of all those who have taken any part in the late upheavals.

She comes out of these encounters flying her bored executive manner and blowing cold on the French nurses for having espoused the cause of the once-valued Médecin-chef. She interviews De Précy. He sounds plausible, and there is also that unimpeachable record of his. Arbitrarily foisted, perhaps, by those in authority into another man's shoes, he finds the situation painful and does not hide the fact. As for the flavour of De Clisson's finger in the pie, if flavour there be, it is too delicate for detection by a foreign palate. In any case, the hos-

pital must not be used as a tilting ground where private grievances may tourney unchallenged. And, besides, as Organization says, why should not the new doctors be as good as the old?

Unhappily the chief actors in these moving scenes are so absorbed that they dress and undress for their parts in public, and rumours of "*explications sanglantes*" have a way of oozing through the boards, long telltale streaks staining the surface of the sea of orderlies which like the waters of Venice—penetrate into every crevice and cranny of their confining walls. Words fly from well-licked idle tongue to idle tongue, and blood from the wounds of pride trickles, trickles, and spreads.

February 7.

The Chic Type, his hand in Inspecteur-général Muret's, comes to visit his old happy hunting ground and take part in a medical debate.

"How ill, how undone, he looks," sighs Moral Influence.

"You see how happy he is, did I not tell you so!" smiles the Directress.

February 9.

It almost looks as though Organization has a grouch; she certainly has a cold. For some days she has lain in her cot with her face to the wall, like Hezekiah, and figs cannot heal her hurt. "How wrong-headed and untrustworthy every one is. Life is so untidy; if only some one would fairly face cleaning it up, might it not easily be done." Baffled she returns to her happy home. Yet perhaps after all she has got what she came for. Her attaché case bulges with documentary evidence of the obliquity of human nature especially as observed under torture in a field hospital.

February 10.

An unusual number of abdominal cases seem to come in. It may be only that, in the absence of our specialist, we are abnormally conscious of them, as for the necessity of super-expert intervention to meet the

procession of bandaged heads so obsessing us with the mysterious horror of disfiguration. Since 1914, Frankenstein himself would be little more than one of a great family of shelterless spirits crouching behind newly hand-made faces—all their intimate personal values of touch with the outer world brutalized and shifted, so trivial a thing as a delicately perceived balance of what an eye, a nose, the curve of a lip or chin counts for in the success or failure of our reconnoitering expeditions into the world of our fellowmen—a hair value perhaps—grossly falsified. And yet that value inexorably moulds our conduct, whether of proud isolation or of kaleidoscopic and throbbing alliances. There is for these no longer their familiar cover. In such a carnival, bewildered eyes scan untried horizons.

Outwardly the days begin to fall into line and roll on quietly enough. The toll of death just now is high and Basine's words "The soldier is sacrificed, the place-hunter triumphs" dig into our peace. But De

Précy says nearly all the wounds are infected when they reach us. We cling to the reassuring record of his skill and to the evidence that he spares himself no pains.

It is hard to gauge the attitude of the French nurses and of those of the old staff who are still here. How much of their distrust of the doctors of the auto-chir grows out of natural partisanship of old friends, how much is courage braving displeasure in high places for the sake of fair play?

THE EYE

February 11.

Can I ever forget that diamond eye! The owner of it was laughingly dubbed my best friend; and, truly, I think there was no day of his long weeks at the hospital when I was not uplifted by a sense of what lay behind that eye. It was really all that one could see of Mongodin, for the rest of his head and face—with the exception of what was visible through a small hole left in the bandages round his mouth, just big enough to pass his *petit régime* through—was completely hidden from us.

It was in bed No. 20 of Salle I that he lay, or sat propped against his pillows, in a scarlet flannel bed-jacket—curious complement of the green eye through which alone he could establish relations with the world around him.

It could hardly be called a beautiful eye. No customary tag or trimming could appropriately be applied to it. It was not even of a popular colour—blue, for instance, or violet or brown—but just of medium size and uncompromisingly, glitteringly green, with a small pupil and no lashes that I can remember, or lashes so scant and of so neutral a tint as to be insignificant.

He was in the hospital when I arrived; and having as yet not been promoted to sitting up or to the distinction of the scarlet jacket, he was much too near the colour of his bed, much too flat and lifeless, to attract general attention. At first his still fragile whiteness frightened me. He seemed too brittle for such as I. I would sidle past him on tiptoe, fearing to add to his pain; but gradually, as it began to dawn upon me that the shining eye was responsive and could feel the comradeship of a mere, shy appreciative glance, I grew bolder, and, after a few more of its encouraging looks, became its slave.

Thus promoted, I would, when on my way past No. 20, pause for a moment and

palely reflect the eye's brave smile, murmur my conviction that an eye of that quality could really see more than any other two; then turn swiftly away, that it should not know how moved I was to divine the measure of endurance buried in that small deep green pool with its glistening surface.

His wound was just above the left temple —a triangular-shaped hole almost an inch and a half long and yawning nearly an inch wide on its upper side. The projectile had passed behind the left eye, damaging it (whether permanently we do not yet know), had opened a way down behind the nose, and had lodged rather forward in the roof of the mouth. It made his head seem like an empty hole. When I first knew him he could not speak; later, dark muffled nasal sounds came from him, darkened still further by the dialect of his province. No one but those constantly with him could make out the meaning of the struggling words, though they suggested a humorous and plucky philosophy, as native to my friend as the colour of his eye.

The hour of his daily dressings was one for which I grew to time my visits to his ward. His nurse would then allow me to pass her what she needed and, while the ordeal lasted, to engage the eye in conversation. The ordeal consisted partly in the excruciating change of *mèches* and drains and in pouring through the gaping triangular temple wound streams of peroxide which would flow down behind the damaged left eye, behind the nose, and be caught by Mongodin himself, sitting up against his bed-rest, in a little white enamel kidney-dish which he would hold, without so much as wincing or even giving vent to any of those strange animal-like sounds which for the time being stood him instead of speech.

Much later, the eye and these sounds together managed to make clear to me that at first the doctors had wanted to extract the cruel lump of lead—which, tied up in a piece of muslin dressing, was now fastened to the head of his bed—through a hole they proposed to make in his jaw just under his nose.

"But I, madame," pointing to the spot, "always felt the hard ridge in the roof of my mouth. And finally monsieur le major listened to me, *et voilà.*"

The first time he really spoke was to make some joking comment on the talk of his neighbours, which they repeated among themselves until his next gay sally. One day two slightly wounded men near him were discussing decorations and saying how much, should their turn ever come, they would prefer the Military Medal to the Cross of Honour: for, "does it not carry a hundred francs pension with it?"

Mongodin's dressing was going on at the time and the bandages loosened round his ears made him keenly alive to their conversation. Without removing his kidney-dish from his lips, he rolled out in his nasal drawl, between the streams of peroxide:

"I, for one, *mes vieux*, would much prefer the Cross of Honour."

An eye is perhaps a small thing, and a green one at that. But when the General with his naked sword saluted Mongodin in

the name of the Republic and pinned to the red flannel bed-jacket both the Croix de Guerre *and* the Médaille Militaire, we, the onlookers, had long guessed how the owner of two alert green eyes, look-outs of an unflinching spirit, had seen his chance and had sprung to take it.

FILLING IN THE BACKGROUND

February 12.

Organization gone; the Chic Type disposed of; the auto-chir, Moral Influence, and La Basine keeping a vigilant eye on one another; Art once more begins to peep through the eyes of the Directress. Her natural interest in the puzzle of life comes through her languid manner. "What a stimulating mentality French women have —they are so widely aware. And awareness, is it not after all the gurgling wellspring of Art? How ineffectual even genius is as an asset—nothing more than a barely perceptible volatile essence of personality—until eye has consumingly penetrated eye and consciousness has dipped itself in form. If perchance these women's vision should be the right one, and not to show fight should, as they say, be a base

capitulation?" The Directress would not like to have a hand in baseness, and conflicting rumours from the operating room and from the wards make her a trifle uneasy. Searchlights flare again across our sky and linger on the auto-chir. Auto-chirs are made to roll. If only this one could be induced to roll away from us. A brand-new medical staff would settle all scores and give us back our peace of mind.

February 13.

Ten bombs fell in the dusky morning somewhere on the near horizon. We saw the flashes and our shacks trembled.

It has snowed heavily all night and now it thaws dismally. Drip, drip, drip, drip, into the tubs outside our huts; drip, rusty drip on to our clean white caps, as we pass under the elbows of soaking stove pipes bent upward over every door.

Front trenches near us have been captured. Madame Bosecke's cart brings up a report this morning that the boches are laying pipes from Bruges to as near Ypres

as they can get. Asphyxiating gas, driven through them at high pressure, will spread from five to seven kilometers from the end of the tube. We are all to have masks, adds the report, and the enemy may be in Paris in a week. If so, what of us? Shall we become a German concentration camp or be driven farther on? Trenches are being dug, and active preparations are apparently being made along the Dunkirk road to meet a possible advance. But we need not worry. While here Organization, alive to emergencies, set afoot a relief expedition stretching through various hands to Washington, and back directly to our field. Our lightest call will make the wires hum! To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

February 14.

At midnight, after an ominously unusual silence, there is a long chain of terrific explosions; then a pause and three more explosions; another pause and explosion after explosion, dying away along the line,

until there is nothing but a distant echo. Out of it all eighteen newcomers are brought in, some of them very bad cases. Six of these men had been sitting round a fire in their colonel's quarters when a shell came through the roof and burst, killing two and wounding the other four.

A big batch of orderlies inoculated against typhoid are on the sick list, and the grumbling list, too. Every sound pair of legs has double work to do.

THE SMILE

February 15.

In Ward I, Jean Magnard lies dying.

"Tchou-tchou, tchou . . ." sighs the pain through his lips. It is one of those cases—wounds in the shoulder, side, and thigh—for which they have not known what first to do. They have cut off the right leg at the hip but have not stopped the gangrene, the smell of which by now is suffocating.

We all know it to be a question of hours. He is a middle-aged man, a territorial, with a lean body and a fine, rough-hewn face, the high sallow cheek bones dropping in

angular lines down to the chin where black and white bristles grow in desolate isolation or in no less desolate scant little groups. The lank, iron-gray hair falls in limp streaks over the lined forehead. The small, keen eyes open sometimes in acknowledgment of any little service or in moments of alleviated pain. The thin voice shapes words from time to time, mostly unfamiliar names; but as evening comes on even these fail and at intervals growing longer and longer only the sibilant, plaintive refrain "tchou-tchou" breaks the silence.

Behind the screen, by the bed, a nurse sits trying to quiet the bony hands as they tear at the bandages or restlessly pick the bedclothes, by holding them in her own—a grasp his half-wandering mind confuses perhaps with that of some absent hand, for at moments he pulls himself out of his stupor and peers probingly at the white figure beside him, then the eyelids drop wearily, as he gives up the effort to reach back from so far.

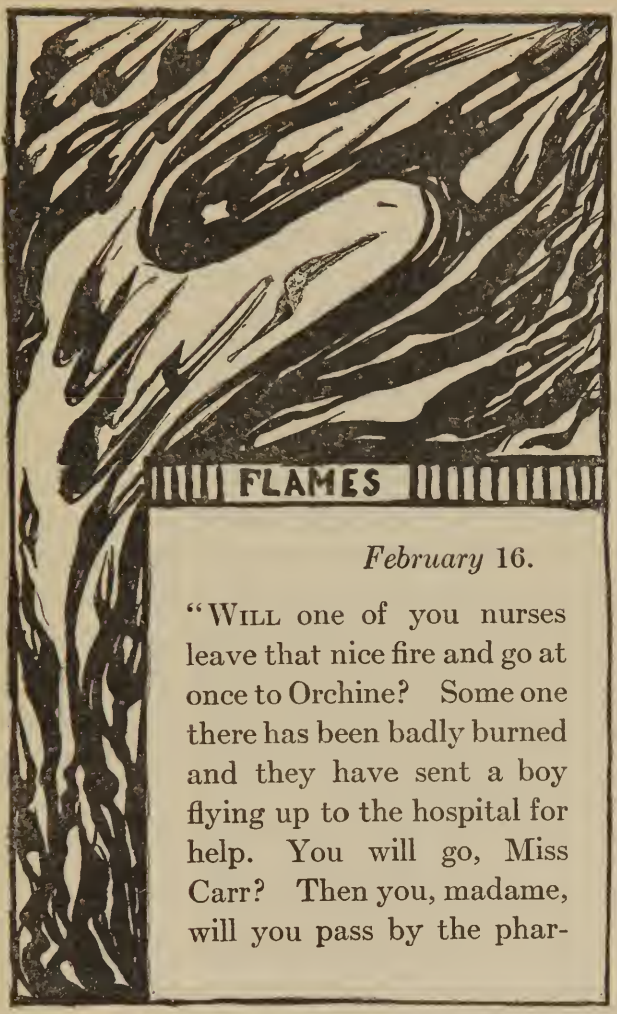
At last the long, dismal day draws in to dusk. The refrain mournfully, monot-

onously blown through the lips has almost ceased. There is a shuffling among the orderlies. The sound of rapid footsteps comes down the long ward. The General stands at the foot of the bed. Lamplight glints on his drawn sword and on the Croix de Guerre hanging from the ribbon which he holds in his hand.

"In the name of the Republic—to you, Jean Magnard"—familiar words and oft repeated in these shacks anchored too near the breaking end of the turbulent waves of human strife not to catch the spindrift of their shattered endeavour—"In the name of the Republic——" The erect old soldier leans forward, gently pushes back the damp wisps of hair and kisses the dying man. Then with a hand on one of the relaxed cold ones he murmurs, "Merci, l'ami."

There is a flutter of the eyelids and a smile slackens the drawn lips.

That smile—was it for us and for our tiny piece of brown metal as we stand by his bed stranded "this side the sheer coast of eternity," or when he smiled, were we already out of focus?



February 16.

"Will one of you nurses leave that nice fire and go at once to Orchine? Some one there has been badly burned and they have sent a boy flying up to the hospital for help. You will go, Miss Carr? Then you, madame, will you pass by the phar-

macy and order two bottles of picric acid and two of distilled water? I will run to the linen room for cotton-wool and bandages and will meet you at the gate. By the way, Rosalie, tell Johnson to get the car ready."

How bitterly cold it is. The pond is crusted with ice along the bank. One of the ducks hesitates dangerously near the transparent inner edge, which slips into a centre of black water where the others put up a feint of enjoying their swim. Overhead the sky opens and shuts: heavy white clouds sway and curtsey to earth's emotions, tantalizingly uncovering and then again hurrying to blot out patches of deep blue—like lids drawn suddenly over smarting eyes that have looked on both sides of that line where cruel guns never cease to snarl and splutter.

We are ready at last. Leaving the windmill on our right we bump along the village street with its double row of cottages, their colour heightened by the oozing in and oozing out of an all-pervading dampness.

At the *estaminet*, usually so clean and

shining, the tables are askew, the chairs pushed back, the half-empty bottles and glasses from the revel of the night before still unwashed.

A pretty mother lets us in. Shrewdly peering through the disfiguring, tear-bruised circles round her eyes one might guess her to be about thirty-five. There is something in her manner beyond the mere pain and horror of the moment—something almost haunted or stricken by remorse which stealthily impresses itself on my consciousness. She leads us on, talking in hurried, broken words.

Germaine had been up early to see her fiancé off. His leave had already been prolonged beyond the twenty-four hours that had been granted. There was barely time for him, as it was, to get back to headquarters. So to hurry on the fire lighting Germaine had poured gasolene. . . . Her first instinct had been to save her face and hands by wrapping them in the little shawl she wore round her shoulders. Then, feeling the flames take hold of her, she had run out

into the back yard and rolled herself in the snow. Her fiancé, hearing her cries for help, had come rushing downstairs, and seeing her flaming there had finally put the fire out with his military cloak—but not before she had been shockingly burned. . . .

"This way, upstairs."

The narrow wooden staircase up which we climb is so steep that instinctively we lean back a little, and the steps are so shallow that our feet suddenly feel uncomfortably big. At the top, on a little landing, are groups of neighbours, aghast but pitying, pressing around the village doctor. His shrug, in answer to their inquiries, is far from reassuring.

"*Ah, voilà*—the nurses with the dressings!"

We push through the door to her bedside. Her bed—large and double—might almost be said to be the whole room. At one side of it is scant space to pass to the tiny deeply embrasured window. An empty champagne bottle and two used glasses stand on the window sill.

On the only chair, his back to the window, his head buried in his hands, his whole body shaken by sobs, crouches the fiancé. At the foot of the bed, on the wall, is a porcelain *bénitier* presided over by a somewhat pagan Infant Jesus, his pink flesh tones and yellow curly hair singing out the only notes of colour on those whitewashed walls unbroken by picture or other ornament. A dark beamed ceiling and wooden wainscot give a compact and almost cell-like look of distinction to the small square room.

The fiancé hears us and looks up. He is late. He must go. Had he forgotten that? But how can he tear himself away and leave in quivering distortion that which only last night, only this morning, had been the desirable and desired body of this girl?

The curlers are still in her hair which grows in a straight line across a rather low forehead. A heavy tress has come loose and streams in brown waves over the pillow. The young face with its clear olive skin and

dark eyes give all his hideous dream the lie. The sheet hides the rest. What is this swift, unmeasured judgment that has fallen on them? Perhaps now, if—no one need ever know—— Yet how pick up old threads with this, which he has helped to do, skulking in his mind?

He is in a trap. There is no escape. His lips almost savagely fall on Germaine's. One little night—— Of course, he had known he would have to pay—something within his means. But life, the usurer, lurking in the shadow, has its hand on their throats and is claiming all. How insufferable to be the writhing prey, the puppet, of a force like that! *Sacredieu!* Even with his lips on hers and the jealous, passionate challenge in his heart, he cannot shut out the memory of those vampire flames. Has savage virtue, suddenly incarnate fire, charred the impulse and turned to ashes what had delusively seemed to him no more than a legitimate moment seized from the bitter denial of life in the trenches?

How sweet her lips—and how young, how

young! Before he knew it he had clattered downstairs and was wildly splashing through the icy puddles and along the cobbled street —away, away, that he might not see again what had lain bare to him before they drew the sheet up to her chin.

At nightfall two of us are again on our way to the estaminet. We carry our night nurses' lantern, which flickers darkly in the clear, consuming moonlight.

"*Qui va là ?*"

Two sentinels come out from behind a corner swinging another lantern. It throws pale blades of shadow, like a reflection of some huge electric fan, across the road and up the fantastic faces of the cottages.

"Show your cards. You have forgotten them? We regret infinitely, mesdames, but we have formal orders. You cannot pass without your cards."

"Have patience, messieurs. The girl so badly burned this morning is dying. We are from the hospital. It is very late. The day has been a busy one."

The murky lantern light plays lingeringly

for a moment on our faces and on our nurses' dress.

"Oh—Germaine? *Bon. Passez, mes sœurs*, and tell us on your way back how she is."

Such a moonlight! We pause a moment on the first bridge to look over the desolate cold

spaces. The unbridled waters of the canal have crawled over the banks and stolen a march on all the sleeping levels of the plain. Here and there hoary willows, their awe-struck hair on end, hold solemn watch over fields where, so few months before, stinking pools of blood in place of water had dried up

under a hot summer sun. Such a moonlight! Large stepping stones, like silver lines, sparkle as with the sentinel willows they tell out the miles to the far-away reddish horizon which our eyes eagerly scan.

On the chair by Germaine's bed, where the fiancé so undone had sobbed in the early morning, is the gnarled old uncle, crooning over the girl and tenderly passing spoonfuls of champagne and water, or little feeding-cups full of beer, through her dry lips.

"Throw me into the Yser! I'm parched, I'm parched. A little beer; oh, I'm parched. Throw me into the Yser!"

There is nothing we can do but moisten the bandages, raise and support the tortured body a little. Everywhere picric acid has soaked through, mottling sheets and bandages and drying in violent yellow plaques. Our shadows are thrown across the bed and up almost menacingly on the whitewashed walls to the ceiling, where the phantom heads are lost in the gloom of dark beams. The too-pink Infant Jesus, leaning out from the wall with his showy yellow

hair, catches a ray of light as he holds out, all unheeded, his little shell-pool of holy water.

On our way to the front door we turn to the mother. The brown patches round her eyes have deepened and spread, and seem now to eat up the whole face. They are repeated on the face of the aunt standing behind her, in the doorway of the neat back parlour. Neither asks a question. Neither says a word. On both faces is passive suffering, a simple, superstitious acceptance, bowing before the perception flashed for a second through torn curtains of consciousness.

Retribution? Has it fallen in the midst of unthinking joyous days? The shadowy Being, dealing out justice from the unplumbed—has he suddenly turned his revolving eye on them, and on Germaine upstairs, who has never been known to shed a tear, and who is perhaps their scapegoat? If so, what use to struggle? Why senselessly flap and flutter wings so hopelessly, so irrevocably singed?

We feel cheap as, looking into those stained and stolid faces, we proffer lying words of comfort, relative only to eyes that have not seen. Yet the brutal fact will crush them soon enough. May they not furtively steal a moment of hope before the curtain falls?

"You see, Moral Influence, there was nothing to be done from the first. From her breasts to her knees she was hideously burned. She suffered shockingly, of course, and never changed her lament: '*Mon pauvre ventre! Jetez-moi dans l'Yser! O mon ventre, mon pauvre ventre! Jetez-moi dans l'Yser!*' They laid her out in a cotton-flannel night dress she had saved up her sous to buy—striped blue and pink, with a scalloped embroidered edge. 'Embroidered by hand! Just see how pretty it is!' Her mother had been obliged to lay it on the bed near her through the last night, that the nurses might put it on when they should change her dressings in the morning. The dancing brown hair was crushed into a tight,

modest little cap, which gave an almost austere purity to the outline of the delicate features. The hands and face were unscarred, and the body under the sheet kept that look of hers—so like a strong young sapling. Poor little Germaine!"

"Germaine did you say? Not Germaine of the estaminet between the two bridges?"

"Yes, that's the girl."

"*Ah, maintenant j'y suis.* A pet of the staff of the operating room and of the old doctor's, too. One heard her name constantly. It was always: 'Have you seen Germaine?' or, 'I am going to see Germaine.' She was quite a favourite. These village girls, you know. . . *Tiens, tiens! c'est elle.*"

CHARACTER

February 17.

MATHURIN GODARD lies in bed 20 of Salle I. He has a clean-cut face, rather wide than long, small, delicate features, and a fine skin, its whiteness pointed by the scarlet semicircle of a half-closed, bloodshot eye. He is wounded in the head, and in the thigh too high up for amputation, and gas gangrene has set in. The flesh comes away in pieces under the scalpel: there is nothing to be done for him. At first he is restless and complaining, but he allows himself to be soothed.

During the night he dictates a letter to his home:

"DEAR UNCLE AND AUNT: I am here, wounded, though my wounds are much less serious than I at first feared. I am drinking orange juice as I write this by the hand of a nurse who is very good to me.

Tell Réné his father has won the Croix de Guerre and the Médaille Militaire—he may be proud of him when he grows up. As to business matters, do not worry. After a year without me, you know better what to do than I. Your affectionate nephew,

"MATHURIN GODARD"

He is continuously thoughtful of his nurses and will accept no dainty without offering them a share.

"Why are you so good to us? You must be very tired after being up all night."

Soon the tell-tale screens are drawn round his bed. One of the night nurses is still up and wishes to remain with him through the luncheon hour. But the nurse of Salle I will not hear of it.

"The orderlies are there to look after him; more than that is pure sentimentality."

When his nurse comes back from her mid-day rest, Mathurin lies dead, alone. The orderlies are playing cards in the pantry.

The hospital is shocked by this man's death. He has awakened its sympathy.

The aunt of Mathurin, a cobbler's wife and younger than her nephew, arrives at

three o'clock from Brittany. The Administration has telegraphed for her, but she comes just too late.

She weeps bitterly, rocks herself and sobs. We try to comfort her, tell her how good he has been, how brave, how considerate. She listens curiously.

"Yes, Mathurin had character. You tell me he was decorated and a hero? He certainly had character. He was gardener to the lady up at the château. His mistress thought everything of him. He was honest, it is true, and never spared himself. At one time he was a little hard. Yes, undoubtedly he was hard. He expected of others, you see, madame, what he himself gave. But one could not keep pace with him. His girl wife did not understand him and she lived only two years. Réné is with us now. He is a delicate little chap and needs care. One hundred francs a year pension goes with the Médaille, is that not so? Ah, only fifty when the decorated one dies? Only fifty francs. Well, even so you need not be afraid. Réné shall never want for a home,

and I will tell him you say his father died a hero. Think of it, Mathurin a hero! He certainly had character. I should not wish you to think, madame, that it surprises me to hear he did his duty."

A DAB AT THE BACKGROUND

February 18.

Rumours float about of anonymous letters having been sent to headquarters denouncing the auto-chir. To suspect Moral Influence or La Basine of sending them any more than De Précy of inventing the fable for his own ends would be equally wide of the mark. All three have dramatic minds picturesquely forceful in their view of one another, but a backbiter, anonymously or not, no one of the three could ever be. De Précy is anxious to sift the matter. However clean-handed he may be, he is harassed. He loses his temper and falls out with the Directress.

"The old medical staff could never have been so discourteous," she sums it up.

Moral Influence and the Directress once more sit hand in hand. What had better be done?

February 19.

The General stands at the door. He is a real general and a fine old gentleman—thin, correct, every inch a soldier. His face is grave. What is this that he hears of dissatisfaction with the doctors, questioning of authority and all the rest? Any complaints, duly reported, will be sifted, but changes the Service de Santé may, with his sanction, have seen fit to make touch no one's dignity and must not be challenged. The civilian mind and the military mind are the poles apart. The hard lesson to be learned here by all is to obey in silence. He in his time has known the taste of that unpalatable cup.

February 20.

While the Directress was in Bailleul today the town was bombarded and about one hundred people injured.

February 21.

Moral Influence and La Basine leave for a holiday in Paris where, as free civilians,

they need cultivate neither De Précy nor neutral and submissive hearts.

February 24.

Every one has long been silently or noisily chewing his or her portion of *vache enragée*—the enraged cow of suppressed emotion. The Directress finds the fare narrow and the Boîte tasteless without Moral Influence and La Basine. Their effervescence, their knowledge of their own people, their impulsive reactions and warm-heartedness, leave a blank. They were, after all, one of our corner stones. Is it merely fancy, or is a purely Anglo-American nursing staff a trifle dull? Where are its feelers? And De Précy, his temper notwithstanding, still reigns triumphant. The Directress herself will go on leave.

February 28.

It is very cold. Two of us have an errand to the oculist at Zuydecoote, the only one for miles around. We must cross the Belgian lines. Sentinels dart out of their straw

boxes, scrutinize our papers, and refuse to let us through. We lack some last local shibboleth. Yet our errand is pressing. Our Parisianized Belgian driver gets down, and a long pantomime of gesticulation follows which we see through the misty windows. The persuasive wit of the Capital tells finally with the good-natured peasant sentinels, or is it the warmth of their straw boxes casts the vote in our favour?

We seem to skim on wings along the road to the sea. The ubiquitous, brightly washed cottages, canals, and airy wind-mills, rise up to meet us and fall flat again on to the endless plains. Every here and there are the earmarks of war—freshly dug, half-flooded trenches and protecting mazes of wire entanglement—then the masterly, far-flung line of the seashore with its flanking sand dunes. Have the free waves, all along, been racing and breaking over the sand, while we behind our ditch and our hedge have been huddled in, oppressed and anxious?

Our business over, we are shown some-

thing of the model hospital with its own farms, its comfortable shacks for convalescents, and the great work its tired-looking oculist is doing for all the wounded eyes of the countryside. We thirstily drink in the invigorating sea-salted air, and turn homeward with tingling, fresh-washed minds. What a clearing of vision the sight of open running lines can be to those who live in circles.

The Long and Short of It

March 2.

The Parisian butcher, wounded in the head, has meningitis. He is a handsome man in a butcherly way—a heavy frame, kinky black hair, and a high colour. All the afternoon, over and over again, he unceasingly makes the same mysterious hieroglyphs on the screen by his bed and on a piece of paper.

Over and over and over again, always illegible, he makes them until he dies.

ANGLES OF VISION

March 7.

A CIVILIAN is brought in from the nearest village. He was about to be mobilized when he shot himself in the foot—accidentally. Whispers of "*embusqué*" float in the air. The orderlies are summary in their judgments.

A young boy who is taken to Salle IV has a badly wounded arm which he hardly seems conscious of. The mention of a hypodermic puts him into a panic and he yells when he sees the nurse preparing it. The other men, who feel somewhat like well-used pincushions themselves, chaff him unmercifully.

March 8.

Monsieur l'Inspecteur-général comes tomorrow from Paris. He is to inspect the hospital. His reputation for spleen has

galloped on before him and makes us rather uneasy. We cast a searching eye on our surroundings, on the look-out for a chance cloven foot.

March 9.

Monsieur l'Inspecteur-général has arrived, fat and administrative looking, in a luxurious limousine. He is on a tour of inspection.

A little knot forms respectfully around him—our Médecin-Inspecteur of every week, the Médecin-chef, the Gestionnaire, and a thin trail of others.

"Ah, ah, so this is Ward I? This is Ward II? This is Ward III? What is the matter with this man?"

"Peritonitis."

"What is the treatment?" (To the Médecin-chef.) "Bon. Why are those cupboards so full of things?—there are newcomers at all hours, you need them under your hand? Send three quarters of that stuff away—the drugs to the pharmacy, the linen and dressings to the lingerie. And

this bottle without a label. Where is the nurse who keeps in her cupboard a bottle without a label? Send her to me. And in this pantry, a pair of shoes! Who ever heard of keeping shoes in the pantry of a ward?—shoes and bed-pans and saucepans all mixed up. It is a scandal! You, Médecin-chef, why do you allow such things? And what is this you tell me about being short of space in the operating room and needing another shack? Where is your surgical automobile? What end does it serve? Have it brought here. Drain this swamp and set up your own operating room. There is no difficulty. Who ever heard of such a thing! Let me see that man's card. He has had twenty grains of anti-tetanus serum? Twenty grains! Grave consequences might result. Who ever heard of giving twenty grains in one dose! You say it was done at the dressing station? His card, I see, is a green one. That is from Bosinghe. I shall make an investigation. Ah, so this is the kitchen! What is brewing on your fire, chef?"

"Potato soup."

"I see, I see—always soup. Soup is like the sea; all things go into it and out of it comes only soup. Where do you keep the bread? Ah, it is here. Dear me, what a

scandal! Who ever heard of such a thing? The bread stacked on shelves and no gauze over it. Do you not know, you chef, you Médecin-chef, you Gestionnaire, that the fly is an insidious enemy of man? No gauze over the bread! I must report that. The coffee has given out. How is that, chef?" The chef pauses.

"It has been given to the newcomers to make their castor oil palatable."

"How many newcomers have you had this month, Médecin-chef? They must indeed sorely have needed to be purged. Who ever heard of such a thing! An inquiry must be made. And those dogs? Why are they allowed to run all over the place?"

"They are pets."

"Pets? They must all be sent away. Dogs are filthy beasts and a menace to mankind. And those ducks? Perhaps you will tell me that the ducks, too, are pets?"

"Oh, the ducks, Monsieur l'Inspecteur—we, as you see, sit on a damp plain. We keep the ducks to eat the mosquitoes."

"Bon, bon! That is good. Prevention is better than cure. And this is the lingerie? What a strange place! It is quite a department store. Why pile things on cupboards; you have no room?"

Behind the Inspecteur's back the Gestionnaire signals to Tessac to be silent.

"Have everything taken off the cupboards. You must *make* room. To have room for everything is the soul of order. Now, for the operating room."

An operation is going on. The surgeon pauses a moment and looks up to offer a word of explanation.

"We have nearly finished."

"Nearly finished? And you still continue with the chloroform! Stop it at once. Who ever heard of such a thing!"

At last it is over. Executive Wonder turns away his eye. The hospital falls back with a sigh into its arduous life of all the days. The tired doctors and nurses exchange glances. Who ever heard of such a thing!

March 10.

The Zepps were abroad again last night. I was just going to bed when the firing began, but I was in time to see the flashes of anti-aircraft guns and the glare of a fire in the sky. Madeleine says the farm from

which the searchlight was played on the intruders was burned down. This is part of our daily bread of rumour.

The Directress is back from her holiday, and the Boîte is glad to see her pretty figure in its bright cloak flitting in and out of the wards—is glad also to shift its responsibilities on to her shoulders. She is pleased, and so is every one, with a report Monsieur le Gestionnaire has been drawing up on our first year's work. We have only lost one man in every thirteen and—since, for the most part, only the worst cases are brought to us—the hospital may be proud of its record.

CHUMS

March 12.

The French protestant, a bookkeeper, is still in bed. He has been as near death as one can go without irrevocably crossing the line—at least what we call irrevocably. Hæmorrhage has followed hæmorrhage and, one night when I went into the operating room, he lay on one of the tables rolled up in blankets and whiter than I have ever seen living flesh. They were afraid to move him and left him there all night. I was gently tiptoeing away when his eyes opened and a smile lighted up his saintly face.

"I am going to God; how good God is; how good He has been to me. No one can ever reach the limits of His mercy." And tears of emotion welled up and trickled over the thin cheek bones. I leaned over him and breathed.

"Will you not try to stay with us?"

"Yes, if God wills. But I hear Him call. Only think, madame, what it will be to see His face."

"What a beautiful and edifying death he is dying," his nurse, little Madame Thomas, whispered.

He had been rapt and talking like that at intervals for hours. They did not stop him, as it seemed to quiet and ease him to talk on. When his surgeon came to say "Good-night" and see that all was well, he thanked him for what he had done for him and said:

"Embrace me, Major, for I am going to God."

Yet he pulled through and lay for many days quietly smiling, apparently as content to stay as to go. When a faint colour had begun to steal back into his cheeks, he beckoned me to him:

"Madame, can you get me any news of an Adjutant Massy, my chief and very good comrade? We were wounded together. He is simply topping; there is no one at all like

him. You could not fail to know him—a small dark man with shining eyes. I have written him a letter, but I do not know where to send it."

"Massy?" I queried. "The name is familiar. Why, of course, he is in the very next ward. Bright-eyed and game as you say, but, poor chappy, he has lost his right arm and the greater part of his right foot. Give me your letter; I will be your postman."

Adjutant Massy was all his protestant friend claimed for him and more. Hardly had they cut off his arm than he asked for pencil and paper and began making marks with his left hand which gradually grew into a letter to his wife. His case was not quite a simple one, for the wound in his foot was infected. During three weeks of great suffering I only once saw him depressed and peevish, and that was one evening after they had, for a third time, taken a piece off his foot. I was in the operating room when he was brought in, and when they unbandaged the wound he

knew by the look of it, as soon as the surgeon did, what was to follow. I simply could not bear his pluck and fled. Later in his own bed and in great pain, he reviled his fate, and we caught for a moment the measure of his long self-discipline.

At the end of four weeks our adjutant could write almost as well with his left hand as he had ever written with his right. The small, neat handwriting so characteristic of a certain class in France.

While he was at his worst his wife was sent for. She was an embroidress—an "artiste," her husband said—working for the big French dressmakers, and so enamoured of her work that when, at the time of the Brussels Exhibition, a certain dress was attracting general attention, she had journeyed all the way to the Belgian capital to see its famous embroidery.

She came immediately though, as she confided to me later, "there is a *gosse* on the way, and travelling this weather is not easy." For days she sat by his bedside, holding the clever left hand, and making

plans with him for the time when he would be well enough to be sent on to Paris. When she could not be in the ward, she spent her time walking up and down the plank-walks with the protestant bookkeeper's wife, who had also hurried to the hospital when the Administration had sounded the note of alarm on her husband's account. They were an amusing contrast. The little Parisian in touch with the fashions and giving to the simplest clothing a smack of the Capital, and the wife from the provinces, all her goodness in her honest rosy face, her stiff felt hat perched independently high on the shiny tightly braided hair, her shabby black merino skirt dipping at the back.

In times of peace, Adjutant Massy had been a traveller for a large house of perfumery, and he boasted that he could tell at a sniff the quality of any scent—particularly of Eau de Cologne to the birthright of which there are so many pretenders. One morning I brought him a tiny bottle of some that had been given to me for Christmas.

He tried it and passed verdict: "Very good and very old; *c'est à base de fleurs d'oranger.*" Then rubbing a drop between his fingers, and with evident delight: "Do you not perceive how light, how exquisite a bouquet it has?"

When I wished him good-bye he said: "I still have some of your Eau de Cologne. I have consulted my friend the barber about it—Monsieur Adolphe, in the bed here on my right. He also is a connoisseur and he shares my opinion that it would be hard to find better—very old and undoubtedly *à base de fleurs d'oranger.*"

In what may one not specialize in a field hospital?

THE BOOT

March 13.

THE sun rises at last on a glistening world. All night a furious cannonade has broken the secretive silence of the falling snow. It has grown at times so violent that our shacks have creaked and rocked and our beds rumbled under us, as though sharply twitched and springing back with

a vibratory movement, starting from the corner pointing toward the loudest noise.

High up, to the right, stodgily swings a *saucisse* keeping watch on the enemy lines, and aeroplanes, with their painted disks—red, white, and blue—buzz over us like great blow-flies. More and more of them speckle the distance, while little balls of smoke, now black, now white, materialize around them for a moment, then are unwound and dragged in long, feathery wakes by the light breeze, until finally engulfed in the insatiable blue of the cloudless day.

Uninterruptedly the routine of the hospital runs on to the accompaniment of the continuous roar along the front. Up and down the wooden pathways the stretcher bearers carry the wounded from their wards to the operating room and back again to their beds, the scarlet stretcher blankets showing up against the snow. There is plenty of time to-day to attend to them all. Between two mouthfuls of smoke a wounded soldier quietly remarks, "*On tape là-bas.*"

In the afternoon our dapper General, in

immaculate red trousers, dustless black coat, and braided cap, his hand on the shining scabbard at his side, pauses for a moment to listen. Then, looking along the suffering beds, he says exultantly: "*C'est moi qui tire!*" All day long, bang and rattle, rattle and bang—a series of apparently disconnected explosions, or the continuous jarring sound of machine-guns, like long heavy chains dragged clanking through iron hawse-holes, the whole forming in my mind a rhythmic sequence to which a graphic form—linked loops and dots, domed curves and sharply pointed angles, jerked from the point of some monster telegraphic needle—might perhaps be given.

For twenty-four hours no newcomers. The obsession of the thundering guns lifts from our spirits as we remember the General's words and begin to hope the damage done is all on the other side.

It is nearly dinner time. Suddenly three whistles announcing the arrival of blessés sound shrilly. Off I speed, trying to keep

my balance on the narrow paths now slippery in the evening frost. Standing at the door of the salle d'attente are two ambulances, the drivers with grave faces holding lanterns, while stretcher bearers gently lift or help the wounded out of the cars. Two, four, six, seven—they are all in now.

I follow them into the long room round which, from lanterns, dim, black-framed slices of light move unsteadily. Three men, variously bandaged, stand facing me, smiling "Good-evening." On stretchers on the floor are four shapeless heaps.

A second—to check a wave of sick apprehension at sight of them.

Whose need is the most pressing? We unwrap the blankets, lift them one by one on to beds. But here is one who cannot be moved. He seems unconscious. The left trouser has been split open to the top leaving bare a leg, the knee a little raised, mottled blue by gunpowder. It lies queerly zigzag on the stretcher, in an un-leglike way. The right leg is bandaged, as are also the whole right arm and hand, of which

the bandages are soaked with recent bleeding. The upper part of the left arm, too, is bandaged, and as for the head—tiny rivulets of blood from scalp, forehead, and nose, have trickled down it like some ghastly wig combed over the face, leaving nothing familiarly human visible, and have spread to neck and chest as far as we can see through the partly open shirt.

Is this thing, lying there so still, alive? "Hot-water bottles quickly!" I take the right boot off the frozen foot and am just beginning to cut the laces of the other heavy boot which still hangs on the end of the limp blue leg, when a clear, firm voice says: "Don't give yourself the trouble, madame, to remove that. When they cut off my leg the boot can come off with it."

I look up and catch the glance of two steady bright young eyes peering at me through that lamentable mask.

A LAST LOOK

March 18.

SPRING is in the air and a call of flowers sings in our thoughts. We put our heads together and write to Paris for seed catalogues. In imagination we have already sown every available space of our field with bulbs and seeds, and the crude green paint of our shacks has disappeared under running nasturtiums varying from palest yellow to crimson. It is also the season of sun-baths which has come on us at a leap. The men are delighted to be carried out of their wards

on to the grass where they can spend long, healing days. The great optimist, our fertile earth, is busy making good our waste.

March 20.

A wire calls me home. Through a maze of conflicting emotions I look back along the days. Civilian life seems as far from me as a skin long ago sloughed off. After my breezy corner of a green shack, in this tiny world of keen living, how self-centred, and cluttered with artificial values that other life will seem.

Yet here as there, devotion and egotism, love and strife, incessantly weave their intricate pattern into a dun background against which all real heroism finds high relief.

The toll of our 140 beds is the grimmest reality of war and measures the enormity of its sacrifice. The simple rite of dying for a thought, and stark human endurance—played over by gaiety of heart—are the standards their occupants set us. For

those they leave behind them, these men once more wipe the political slate clean with their blood—innocent blood that through the ages appears, however illogically, to be the only effacing medium. The mutilated bodies and lives of innumerable scapegoats are the highway along which we still irresponsibly chalk up a score that in its turn must be wiped out.

If the denial of life for a dream of freedom is the face of their currency to-day, how shall we—our ears tuned to the overtone of their endeavour—see to it that tomorrow, bought at such a price, bear on its face something more than a promise of three meals a day with a zest—for ourselves?

March 22.

This is my last day at the hospital. It is a quivering morning of misty golden sunshine. I think regretfully of the coming leavetakings—of the soldiers and of these people who have so soon become part of my life. As a send-off the Directress kindly suggests that Night Hawk and I take a

drive. Monsieur le Gestionnaire is all pleasant acquiescence.

"Where would you like to go?"

"Would Poperinghe be possible?"

"You may be stopped—still you can but come back." And he makes out a pass.

No one accosts us. We drive through the British lines, meeting British guns, British troops, all along the road. The town seems half asleep. Straggling through it are soldiers—strolling, talking, smoking. I am disappointed to find it so little interesting—only more or less scarred, more or less wounded, like all other bombarded towns. There is a crushing sameness in destruction; the degree only differs. Most window spaces are boarded up, others are pasted over with Union Jack stars of paper to hold them firm through future shocks. Two lines of Tommies are being drilled in front of the blank windows of the hospital. The church is locked; we cannot see it. The square and market place look deserted. Night Hawk asks some young Durhams for news of a Canadian regiment. All venture

suggestions but no one knows anything. We are all so happy under the pulsating sunshine that we feel like giving forth little green shoots. To be alive and know it seems, for the moment, enough. Yet my train must be caught and we have only just time to get home.

We crank the motor up and, as we leave the square and turn for a last wave of the hand, we see them still standing there, waiting—so rosy and so young.

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